THE THINGS WE SAY

Contemplative Reflections on

THE THINGS WE SAY

Glenn Morison

Copyleft © 2017 by Glenn Morison All rights unreserved. All parts of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form you wish.

Design by Beverley Plett.

All Bible quotations come from the New International Version or the New Revised Standard Version except where indicated.

Printed in Winnipeg, Canada at McNally Robinson Booksellers.

First Limited Edition ISBN 978-978-1-77280-160-6

Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who took time to read portions of this work and offer me comments in return. These include Peter Ross, Matt Morison, Morag Morison, Alex Merrill, Shawn Lamb, Harold Neufeld, Gwen Anderson, Rick Chafe, Patricia Robertson, Sandra Stuart, Wruth Wood, Mavis Dixon, Paul Campbell, Russ Martin, Michele Weber, Donn Coppens, John Samson-Fellows and Christine Samson-Fellows as well as others.

Thank you to the Winnipeg Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and the Old Grace Housing Co-operative for joining me in this venture.

I also wish to acknowledge the patrons who helped offset the printing costs to ensure that every dollar donated will be put to use for affordable housing.

Glenn Morison

Note to the Reader

This book is being released as a fundraiser by the Winnipeg Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) (winnipegquakers.weebly.com) to sponsor an affordable housing suite in the Old Grace Housing Co-operative (www.oldgracehousingcoop.ca).

If you have received this book as a gift and would like to value my effort, please make a tax-deductible donation to:

Winnipeg Monthly Meeting
Box MPR
145 Maryland St.
Winnipeg, MB R3G 1K9

Donations can be made to the Winnipeg Monthly Meeting at: www.canadahelps.org

Or you can contact me directly at glenn@morison.ca or at: www.morison.ca/thingswesay

Post release, this book will be available directly from me. You will also be able to buy it through McNally Robinson Booksellers for $16.95. All proceeds will be forwarded to charity.

Thank you!

Glenn Morison

Table of Contents

Introduction....1
Action....3
Choice....13
Community and Cooperation....21
Death....33
Equity, Equality and Fairness....43
Foresight....51
Forgiveness....61
Friendship....69
Generosity....75
Gratitude....83
Honesty and Truth....91
Hope, Trust and Optimism....97
Humility....107
Integrity....115
Judgment....127
Justice and Law....143
Mystery and Understanding....151
Patience....165
Providence....171
Responsibility and Service....179
Unity....197
Endnotes....203

Introduction

We all encounter many slogans, aphorisms, quotations and proverbs. And, working in prison chaplaincy, I have been privileged to hear great testimonies of how these words have helped people make their way through phenomenally disturbing circumstances. For instance, I have heard the words, “You always get a second chance” continue to give life to people who have already frittered away twenty or more chances, yet persevere when many others would have given up.

I have also heard confused people utter various slogans hoping but no longer trusting they have any real worth or meaning. I have heard people excuse the most foolish mistakes, even getting married to someone they had never met face to face, by muttering, “You only live once.” In that case, it appeared the words were not life giving at all. Instead, the catchphrase deflected responsibility and prevented the person from learning from their mistake.

At their best, such proverbs are called to mind in a split second to provide sustenance and direction. The very same words can also be empty, rote and meaningless. They can create confusion and distraction instead of real integration, spiritual challenge and growth.

Yet other common phrases have become innocuous over time compared to their heavily freighted origins. An example is the saying, “Nothing is certain but death and taxes” which has nowhere near the impact of its first recorded use.

My intent is not to give a pass or a fail to each of the turns of phrase. Instead, my intention is to delight, invite and provoke. My desire is to bring the words alive and into the midst of your daily struggles. Where you go with that is much more important than where I begin!

I do not offer this as a book of systematic theology. However, I am optimistic that the consistency of my viewpoint will be a gift. My hope is that these reflections will speak God's Word with life, resiliency and maturity. I offer texts, ideas and convictions that have helped me not only to cope but to thrive while encountering fallen humanity and fractured social systems which, in turn, create pain, injustice, alienation and despair on a daily basis.

This work reflects three major influences: My experience of jail and prison life as a chaplain is reflected in many of the phrases I chose and illustrations I use. My vocation as a United Church minister, along with other influences, shows itself in my understanding of the authority and interpretation of scripture. And my life as a Quaker has yielded the structure of the book and provided implicit guidance throughout.

I use the word "contemplative" in the title because I so greatly admire and draw upon the contemplative traditions. Rather than try to define or give an inadequate history of contemplative spirituality, I want to tell you what I have found in the writings and teachings of contemplatives.

I experience contemplative spirituality as engagement, movement, humility, paradox, patience, transience, open-endedness, mystery and surrender. A contemplative approach is just that: an approach, a means, and not an end.

I describe the life of faith as “touching pain with love.” I offer my comments, insights and illustrations hoping they bring that joy closer to the centre of your life.

Glenn Morison

Action

While unprogrammed Quaker worship is quiet and patient, this does not imply that Quakers are to lead lives entirely marked by retreat and reflection. There is always the call to make a difference: to put action into words. Quakers ask,[1] "Do we partake in the joy of love of God and make our lives a celebration of the sharing of this love?"[2] The sharing of love is to be lived out with thought, word and deed.

Quakers consider attending meeting regularly to be "the heart"[3] of being a Quaker. Showing up matters. Being a Quaker is not a concept but a lived reality.

Quakers understand themselves to be a peace church and therefore seek to "live in the life of the power that takes away the occasion for all wars."[4] One cannot rise to the challenge without action. Prayer, reflection and conversation are not enough to live in the powerful place that would bring an end to war. The passive refusal "to participate in or cooperate with the military effort" falls short of the life and work that will remove the causes of war.[5]

Quakers are encouraged to open all areas of their lives to the examination of both inaction and action. "We speak through inaction as much as we do by our actions."[6]

The call to engagement is nowhere clearer than in the query: "Are you following Jesus' example of love in action?"[7]

The quotations which follow speak common wisdom which encourages fuller engagement with daily life.

The longest journey begins with a single footstep

Very similar words, depending on the translation, appear in chapter 64 of the *Tao Te Ching* written by Lao Tzu over 2,500 years ago. It is surrounded by a number of similar phrases, all saying that very big things begin with small things. However, the words that precede the proverb give it the particular meaning: “Manage before things get out of order.” We are instructed to lay a solid foundation, to plan with intent and to trust in the process and accept the results. There is no end to the uses of this saying in contemporary contexts. Scott Montgomery, the marketing manager for Delicato Family Vineyards, used it to explain why you move from left to right when tasting wine. He altered its meaning slightly by adding, “You have to start somewhere.” One could offer many parallels. For instance, the longest book begins with a single page.

> Matthew 17:20
> *He said to them, “Because of your little faith. For truly I tell you,*
> *if you have faith the size of a mustard seed,*
> *you will say to this mountain,*
> *‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move;*
> *and nothing will be impossible for you.”*

Jesus offers the teaching that a little faith can do great things. This holds within in it the notion that long journeys begin with a single step. In both the Bible verse and the Taoist proverb, this is a call to move from inaction to action, an invitation to move away from thinking one’s efforts might be wasted, into trusting that they will be fruitful. Whereas the idea that every journey begins with a single step is self evidently true, the notion that one can move a mountain by speaking to it, is not a common experience. In fact, if the idea did not exist in scripture, the phrase might not even exist. Jesus loves exaggeration. Whether we believe in flying

mountains or not, the gift of faith leads us into taking first steps and stepping into the unknown on a daily basis, trusting the Spirit to lead us.

Live every day as if it were your last

These common words echo the sentiment of other sayings, including the Latin *carpe diem*, which translates as “seize the day.” Also familiar is “Eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die” (1 Corinthians 15:32). The context of these words means so much. If the focus is on the here and now, then it is a call to make the most of things, perhaps meaning, literally, eat and drink as much as you can, if that is what you seek the most. If the focus is on a post-death judgment, then the words are heard to mean, “Get right with God” so that, if it *is* your last day, then you will be ready for judgment. I encounter such words with inmates who use them to justify taking wild chances, or to explain crazy choices that followed the knowledge that an arrest was pending. In that context, living each day as if it were your last implies a destructive way of living.

> James 4:13-15
> *Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow*
> *we will go to such and such a town*
> *and spend a year there, doing business and making money.”*
> *Yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring.*
> *What is your life?*
> *For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.*
> *Instead you ought to say,*
> *“If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this or that.”*

This verse does not speak of pending judgment that you must prepare for. On the contrary, it speaks about the great uncertainty about anything in the future. It is precisely a call to live in the moment, to seize the day and to be radically and mindfully present. Tomorrow is within God's hands so any planning about tomorrow is presumptuous. Live everyday as if it were your last. And enjoy doing so!

Just do it

Nike® found fewer words to say, “Action is the foundational key to all success.” Pablo Picasso usually gets the nod for this longer version but a particular context never appears. In my research, I came across a book of his entitled *One Liners*. I expected witticisms, but what I got were drawings of his that he made without taking his pencil off the paper. There are a few brief quotations in the book but none of them are remotely close in nature or content to these words on action. The closest, and it is not that close, is “The fatigue of one's hand as one draws is a perception of time.” The link would be that action, which creates fatigue, gives time its meaning. In the movie *Shawshank Redemption*, the character Andy Dufresne, played by Tim Robbins, offers the advice to “get busy living or get busy dying” which is not far removed from “Just do it.” Prisoners are more likely to use the acronym WTF to describe acting without thinking. While “Just do it” is often implied to mean acting after some amount of thinking, WTF decisions do not carry the same connotation.

> Psalm 23:1-3
> *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*
> *He makes me lie down in green pastures;*
> *he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.*

One of the best lessons I received in seminary was to read texts primarily to see “what God does.” I was encouraged to underline the verbs used with God, as I have above, in order to find the heart of a given passage. How many times have you heard the 23rd Psalm? How many different verbs describe God in that psalm? I count eight verbs in six verses. If actions speak louder than words, then verbs speak louder than nouns or adjectives! God is what God does. Or, as others have said, “God is a verb.” Both Marilee Zdenick (1974) and David A. Cooper (1998) have published books

with the title *God is a Verb*. If God's actions speak louder than words, then likely ours do too!

Barking dogs seldom bite

This proverb, of undetermined origins, is not much different from the similar, “His bark is worse than his bite.” Note they both leave room for some biting! It is not that barking dogs never bite; it is just less likely than you think. The meaning, when extended beyond dogs, is that those who threaten, often only threaten. I have heard it said of various criminal gangs that a threat not followed up on undermines any credibility so threats are never issued. The implication is that since they always follow through, and no threat can be considered aside from its actions. The last thing that they can afford to be is the barking dog that does not bite. The remand detention centre where I worked had windows on all the cell doors. This gave rise to the term “window warrior” for a person who was brave and tough when separated by officers and secure doors, but who ran for cover when a real threat of contact was evident. Inmates tended not to fear these “window warriors” just as we do not fear a dog whose bark is fiercer that its bite. Similar phrases can be found as far back as the 13th century: Within Aesop’s fable, *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*, we find someone whose words become hollow when they are not followed by truth.

> Exodus 9:1-3
> *Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh, and say to him,*
> *‘Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews:*
> *Let my people go, so that they may worship me.*
> *For if you refuse to let them go and still hold them,*
> *the hand of the Lord will strike with a deadly pestilence*
> *your livestock in the field:*
> *the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds, and the flocks.’”*

The plagues of Exodus are certainly a case where the barking dog bites, and the barking dog is God.

One day at a time

This sage advice has served many. The adage is a common bumper sticker and a sign on the walls at AA meetings. For many, these words offer the only way to deal with grief or disaster. A friend took it even further when his wife died in a tragic accident, saying he and his daughters lived one minute at a time for the months that followed. It is also the way many people face and live through long term incarceration. Twenty-five years can only be served one days at a time, before any chance for parole. Seen as a whole, it looks impossible. One day at a time is the only possible way. Very early in my ministry, I was reminded that "preaching is cumulative." In other words, you don't have to say everything in every sermon. Not only do you not have to be exhaustive, you ought *not* to be. With one sermon at a time you help your congregation build their theology and spiritual base. Sermons are oral moments, meant for the day they are offered. They are to be heard – one day at a time – as well.

> Matthew 6:34
> *So do not worry about tomorrow,*
> *for tomorrow will bring worries of its own.*
> *Today's trouble is enough for today.*

While the Bible verse focuses on the challenges of each day, the phrase "one day at a time" can refer to the highs that life brings as well. As if to say, enjoy the moment but do not expect it to last forever, and endure a difficult moment for the same reason. In fact, its use within AA has precisely this double meaning. One does not have to sort out a lifetime of sobriety in a flash. The invitation is to build the new sober life one day at a time. In the same way, years and years of sobriety makes no guarantee of the next tomorrow.

Fake it 'till you make it

This piece of advice is also common in AA circles. The implication is that even when your sobriety doesn't feel right you should not give up as the program will make sense with time. It is also used in other settings such as making a relationship work, going to church, working through depression and staying in school. It is not the same as simply being optimistic. It acknowledges the feelings of optimism may not be real but asks you to embody your intention with actions.

> Exodus 20:1-2
> *Then God spoke all these words:*
> *I am the Lord your God,*
> *who brought you out of the land of Egypt,*
> *out of the house of slavery;*

The Ten Commandments follow this verse. We normally think of a "command" as being a requirement that is announced, a rule writ large. However, when God speaks, it can be heard differently. God's commands are descriptions of what is to come. As such, we can read the Ten Commandments as ten promises. God isn't saying, "Here is a rule, follow it or else." God is saying, “I promise you these things. Someday, you will have no interest in killing. Someday, you will love your partner so much you will have no interest in other partners. You can look forward to the day you will be so content with all that you have, you will not even think of stealing.” Instead of being a source of pride for those who pretend to live them all fully, the commandments become a source of hope for us all. And while we wait for the fulfillment of God's command promises, we can all “fake it ‘till we make it!”

Better to light a candle than curse the darkness

This phrase is often identified as a “Chinese Proverb.” However, Peter Benenson, who was instrumental in the creation of the human rights organization Amnesty International, first used the phrase in connection with Amnesty's symbol: a lit candle wrapped in barbed wire.

> Isaiah 9:2
> *Those who lived in a land of deep darkness—*
> *on them light has shined.*

Light is ubiquitous in scripture as an image for God and holiness; it is also central in Quaker thought and writing. John’s Gospel uses the word “light” in this way sixteen distinct times. Although the image refers to physical light, the image of lightness or levity is also available to us. We can go through life buoyant and resilient due to the lightness that God gifts us. This is why Quakers often use the phrase “holding in the Light” for prayer intentions. It is my practice to both picture those I am praying for as being “in the Light” basking in warmth and clarity and “being light” in terms of buoyancy and freedom. This frees me from the constrictions of words when I pray this way. The prayer image has its own life. Yogini Sivananda Radha Saraswati received the *Divine Light Invocation* in 1956, a prayer for others in trouble, which she shared around the world. It is invoked for the support of those known to be troubled and burdened.

> I am created by Divine Light
> I am sustained by Divine Light
> I am protected by Divine Light
> I am surrounded by Divine Light
> Every cell of this my physical body
> Is filled with Divine Light
> Every level of consciousness

Is imbued with Divine Light
I am one with the Light
I am a perfect channel of the Light

Why put off until tomorrow what you can do today?

Well into my work on this writing, I was unaware of anyone completing and publishing a project quite like this one. Then I stumbled across an Amazon ad for the best seller, *Until Today*. I was humbled! The book is described as "365 daily devotionals that support the time-honoured adage, 'Why put off until tomorrow what you can do today?'" I was inspired! If Iyanla Vanzant can write 365 reflections on one adage, I can certainly write 201 reflections on 201 adages! Providing, I thought, that I get started without putting it off another day. Adages such as this one point to the vast differences in life while incarcerated. In most cases, among all other factors, doing time is profoundly boring and usually nothing *has* to be done on any given day. The phrase is almost nonsensical in a prison. The exception that proves the rule is one guy I knew who kept a "to do" list tucked in his sock every day as a way of coping with prison life, and finding meaning in each day.

> Psalm 103:15-16
> *As for mortals, their days are like grass;*
> *they flourish like a flower of the field;*
> *for the wind passes over it,*
> *and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.*

We are transient! If my writing has made me hear one thing that I had never fully heard from the scriptures, that is it. I had certainly read words like these before, but I now felt bombarded by them as I worked through writing these reflections. Our transience is held in our face from the beginning to the end of the Bible. Yet from expensive funerals to Botox injections to magic pills to all sorts of attempts to leave a legacy, it seems we are slow to embrace our fleeting vitality. Imagine introducing yourself to a stranger or describing yourself in a job interview as a "blade of grass that withers and blows away." If we truly

acknowledge that even the existence of the future itself is uncertain, we would surely be motivated to “do today what we put off until tomorrow.”

It’s never too late to learn

Originally recorded in the 1600s, this proverb has its exact opposite in the phrase, “You can't teach old dogs new tricks.” Both sayings are used most commonly to justify a choice after the fact, rather than making a measured assessment before making a choice. Sometimes it is rendered as, “You are never too old to learn.” While this phrase rules out the opposite being true in all cases, it does not deal with averages and probabilities. My experience in dealing with people with addictions is that those under 25 have very little chance of overcoming an addiction. Their youth tends to make them feel invincible and their prefrontal cortex is still developing. On the other side, those over 35 have often become too injured by their use and too jaded by their lifestyle to seriously imagine themselves living free of drugs and alcohol. When it comes to addictions, it is never too early or too late to learn, but it can be much more difficult for both the young and the old.

> Luke 22:39-44
> *He came out and went, as was his custom,*
> *to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him.*
> *When he reached the place, he said to them,*
> *“Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.”*
> *Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down,*
> *and prayed, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.”*
> *[Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.]*

With Jesus at the Mount of Olives, we are very late in his earthly ministry. In a sense, the disciples are only about to

begin their ministry. If you grant that prayer is a form of education, where God instructs, leads, supports and directs us, then Jesus is learning right up to the very end. In addition, although Jesus had been preparing his students for his arrest and crucifixion, they still needed teaching. In fact, they were still beyond hope of being taught. Jesus clearly affirms that it is never too late to learn, even for him!

Choice

Simplicity is one of the traditional Quaker Testimonies. Quakers recognize that "a simple lifestyle is [a] freely chosen . . . source of strength."[8] The assertion of freedom to choose is central in Quaker perspectives. For example, Quakers are encouraged to "not be persuaded into buying what you cannot afford." They are also urged to "keep informed" as important choices are required of us each day.[9]

Quakers ask themselves, too, to be "sensitive to issues of equality, autonomy and power."[10] It is a choice to live this way just as it is a choice to not live this way. Quakers are led to analyze the social structures we live in. The Australian Yearly Meeting, for instance, has developed their own queries and advices to ensure that "thousands of years . . . of Aboriginal Peoples" living on the land are never forgotten when reflecting upon contemporary issues.[11]

The Quaker testimony to simplicity is linked to the ways in which Quakers work to protect and preserve the environment. As our world becomes increasingly threatened, responsible choices become more important. If Quakers are to "work to ensure that our increasing power over nature is used responsibly,"[12] then the first stop toward that work is attention to care and wisdom in choice making.

The quotations that follow offer a variety of thoughts on how we ought to respond when faced with choices in our lives.

Choose the lesser of two evils

Cicero, Aristotle, Plutarch and Chaucer and others said words to this effect. A humorous gloss comes from the movie *Klondike Annie* where Mae West says when given the choice of two evils, “I'll choose the one I never tried before.”

> 1 Thessalonians 5:22
> *Avoid every kind of evil.*
> *Abstain from every form of evil.*

These isolated words from Paul's letter appear to directly contradict the notion that one must choose between two evils. While seeking what is good, we are to flee evil in *all* its forms. Yet life is not always so simple. For instance, if we want to buy soap and we have some soap companies that exploit labour and others that hurt the environment and still others that harm animals in testing, are we then required to make our own soap? Or are we able to study the companies and choose the one that causes the least harm in making its soap? While I could offer about 50 or more scriptures that point to this “all or nothing” approach to good and evil, I find it interesting that the conservative technology guru and blogger, Rod Martin, offers a challenge to such thinking. He talks about the elections of Absalom, David and Solomon as Kings of Israel, and the crowning of Rehoboam, as examples where abstract perfectionism is overcome by limited choices and the need for pragmatism. Abstain from every evil in theory? And choose the least evil in practice? Perhaps this is a common ground that holds together the hopes and desires we share with the realities we all face.

We have a choice

One of Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* is “being proactive.” It means to choose rather than accept. So often we say, “I have no choice” when we do have options. We may not like the choices but there are choices. You have a boss you can't stand? You can choose to quit your job! You don't have the money to eat your favourite foods? You can choose to change your diet! Your friend gets on your nerves constantly? You can end the friendship! Once you have convinced yourself that you are powerless, you are. Reminding yourself that you are choosing to accept things often helps the situation look more manageable. However, when it comes to addiction, author Gabor Maté suggests that addiction is not about choice. He connects addiction to childhood trauma that affects proper brain development and prevents the brain from responding to pain properly. While the person without this problem has an appropriate biochemical response to pain, either physical or mental, the addict, whose dopamine receptors have not fully developed, is constantly seeking out stimulants of all kinds. Maté asserts that approaching addiction in terms of choice is not only a great oversimplification, it is a very harmful one.

> Matthew 22: 21b
> *Then he said to them, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar's,*
> *and to God what is God's.”*

What does Jesus actually say with his answer about paying taxes to Caesar? Does he say it is obvious to pay taxes since Caesar is the emperor? Or does he counsel people to *not* pay taxes to Caesar because Caesar is not *the true* emperor? Jesus says the answer is not obvious: You have a choice and you need to make it. He does not provide a definitive answer because there is no one answer. The life of

faith is not one of certainty but one of constant reliance on the Spirit for guidance. Among the many examples of this is John 8 and the story of the “Woman caught in adultery” when Jesus says, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” Instead of advocating the obvious – she sinned so she should be stoned to death – Jesus infuses the situation with complication, choice and the need to rely on the Spirit to choose our course of action.

Between a rock and a hard place

There is no real advice in this phrase. However, the fact that it is used to describe a situation that is very difficult with no apparent solution, implies that *all* situations have to be reckoned with and when you are "between a rock and a hard place," it is better to be honest about than in denial of your circumstances. The most literal use of this phrase might be by bestselling author Aron Ralston with the title of his book, *127 Hours: Between a Rock and a Hard Place.* Ralston tells his story of being pinned by an 800-pound boulder against a canyon wall in Utah and choosing to cut off his arm in order to survive the ordeal. A similar phrase known to many is "to be caught between the devil and the deep blue sea." The jailhouse phrase "hooped" which often refers to hiding drugs in your anus, is also used describe situations where no options are attractive.

> Isaiah 43:2-3a
> *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;*
> *and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;*
> *when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,*
> *and the flame shall not consume you.*
> *For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,*
> *your Savior.*

The confidence God gives is that we are protected in *all* situations, not just when things feel good. This confidence is meant to transform us. Transform us where our insecurities – and we all have many – no longer hold us hostage. Transform us to a place where we do not cling, control or cover up who we really are. To trust in God being there whenever you feel "between a rock and a hard place" liberates you to no longer anticipate such situations and to live freely at all times! Generally, people who live in such freedom are inspiring, inviting and inimitable.

If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen

President Harry Truman, who attributed it to his friend General Harry Vaughn, popularized this phrase. It is not limited to cooking; rather, it is a metaphor for any situation that creates challenge or "heat." If you are not ready to take on a challenge, there is no sense pretending you are. Truman intended these words for his staff: If they were not up to the task, they had better resign. In the same way that the word "kitchen" is a euphemism for high placed government offices, the word "game" is often used by criminals for the lifestyle where crime is a major or only source of income. Countless times I have heard the phrase, "I just have to get out the game" as an understatement for the huge changes needed and the potential retributive impacts and consequences of such a decision.

> Matthew 16:24
> *Then Jesus told his disciples,*
> *"If any want to become my followers,*
> *let them deny themselves*
> *and take up their cross and follow me."*

If Matthew has any point to make in his Gospel, it is that discipleship has its costs. It is important to note that Jesus describes the cross as something to be "picked up" rather than something to be given and received. In high school, I had a close friend whose father had been very abusive to his mother before leaving the family. She referred to this as her "cross to bear," which I did not understand. I remember asking my own mother to explain it and not understanding any better after talking with her. Years later, I understood enough to disagree. The abuse that she received was not her cross to bear; taking up the cause to do something about it *was* her cross to bear. For my friend's mother, raising her two kids on her own the best way she could was her cross to bear. This led to the end of the marriage, the

alcohol-related death of the father, and a life of freedom and opportunity for her and her children. Literally, she stayed in the kitchen, withstood the heat and moved on to a fuller life.

Decisions aren't forever

This is another slogan that has some traction in the Twelve Step community. On the surface, it seems to encourage people to be open to changing their minds. As information and circumstances change, so ought decisions. Put in a positive light, this quote says, “Keep an open mind.” It also echoes the wisdom of living “one day at a time.” It is a reminder that any decision does not have to make sense for infinity, but rather, just until there is good reason to reconsider it. This could be a long time or a short time. This paradox can be expressed like this: Faith is comprised of the seemingly self-contradictory “tentative absolutes.” I find it a gift to spend time around young people, who seem to easily grasp the wisdom of this phrase.

> Genesis 9:16
> *When the bow is in the clouds,*
> *I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant*
> *between God and every living creature*
> *of all flesh that is on the earth*

The story of Noah includes this promise that God has made a decision to *never* “flood the entire earth” again. Perhaps the advice that “decisions are not forever” does not apply to God. Or, perhaps some decisions should last forever. Likely, the phrase “Never say never” is the closest we can come to an answer that admits we don't really know.

Lead, follow or get out of the way

My father used to use a slightly enlarged version of this phrase. It is commonly attributed to General George Patton and, when done so, often begins, “We herd sheep, we drive cattle, [and] we lead people.” Patton’s words also come with the more personal wording, “Lead me, follow me, or get out of my way.” While I have no particular reason to doubt its authenticity, I do wonder how many were on the list of people that Patton invited to lead him. Others, from Thomas Paine to Ted Turner are credited with this phrase and several authors have written books explaining how to follow the advice.

> Mark 9:2-4
> *Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John,*
> *and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves.*
> *And he was transfigured before them,*
> *and his clothes became dazzling white,*
> *such as no one on earth could bleach them.*
> *And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses,*
> *who were talking with Jesus.*

I believe you see Jesus do all three things in these few verses. First, Jesus follows the lead of God and goes up the mountain. He takes Peter, James and John with him, leading their way. Then, once they are there, he gets out of the way so Elijah and Moses have a chance to speak. Jesus may not have preached these exact words, but he did practise them.

It is time to fish or cut bait

This obscure phrase plays itself out in The *Trial of Impeachment of Levi Hubbell, Judge of the Second Judicial Circuit*. The trial was held in the Wisconsin Senate in June of 1853. The proceedings allow you to read the debate about the meaning of it being time to fish or cut bait, which was, at that time, an unfamiliar phrase. In that context, the somewhat archaic term “enjoin” is clarified: If you state your intention, you should follow it up or make it clear you *won't* follow it up. The same meaning is reflected in the phrase “Sh-- or get off the pot.” The aphorism’s original meaning was not simply about making a choice, as it is often used, but rather a direction to act upon your promises.

> Matthew 20:22
> *But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking.*
> *Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?"*

The Gospels are full of examples of Jesus asking his followers to take their commitment seriously. Both Mark and Matthew report that James and John come to Jesus wanting to have the honour of sitting at his right and his left in “His glory.” In Matthew’s Gospel (22:20), it is the “mother of Zebedee's sons” who asks the question. In Mark (10:35), it is James and John themselves who ask for the prominent spots. In each case, Jesus responds with a question that almost certainly points to his crucifixion. He is saying, “If you want to be close to me, you need to ‘fish or cut bait’ in the sense that their request to sit in glory implies a commitment to follow wherever Jesus’ path leads. That commitment will soon have enormous consequences.

Community and Cooperation

Although conflict is not foreign to Quaker meetings, there are many reminders within Quaker life to live with respect in community. Quakers are "cautioned against any harshness of tone or manner when administering counsel or reproof."[13]

This advice is not limited to simple congeniality. True cooperation requires true engagement. Quakers are to "seek to know one another in the things which are eternal, bear the burdens of each other's failings and [to] pray for one another."[14] Such community building takes time, patience, understanding, vulnerability and creativity.

Quakers are to ensure that their family operates as a harmonious community. Homes are to be places of "loving friendship and enjoyment . . . where all who visit may find peace and refreshment in God's presence."[15] Building, sustaining and nurturing community is not a task or duty. Rather, it is a way of life. A way of life that is "open to receive."[16]

Cooperation is a fundamental aspect of community. Quakers are encouraged to follow the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.[17] Such cooperation is to extend beyond one's own meeting to ecumenical efforts and joining with other groups who share common concerns.[18] Quakers are to "speak truth . . . and yet remain open to truth as understood by others.[19]

Quakers are led to live cooperative lives as an example to others and in doing so build community that is equally exemplary.

The sayings that follow include both encouragement and caution about joining with others in community activity.

One bad apple spoils the barrel

For the record, this is true. Rotting fruit produces ethylene which can speed the ripening process in other fruits. English preacher and writer, John Northbrooke put these words to paper in 1577 but credits Chrysostom, a 4th century theologian. Rarely are people talking about apples. It is bad people, so the quote implies, that have a negative influence on others. Personally, I hate this phrase as it is often used to deny systemic issues. When I tried to tell the superintendent of the correctional facility where I worked that there were huge problems with staff health and morale, she replied by *agreeing* that there "were a few bad apples" that they had to deal with. I countered that the image was wrong. The barrel was already spoiled and when a good apple came to work, they soon were tainted by the others. The use of this phrase as metaphor promotes a very dangerous oversimplification. Huge and complex structural forces create an unhealthy workplace and ridding a few targets will never solve such problems.

> 2 Thessalonians 3:14
> *Take note of those who do not obey what we say in this letter;*
> *have nothing to do with them, so that they may be ashamed.*

Texts such as this one give rise to the formal practice of some churches, and the informal practice of most churches: shunning. The verse that follows includes a reminder that such isolation is to be offered with care, and for the purpose of restoration. We sometimes miss the mark on this, whether it be a formal shun or informal ignorance. A friend once told me that in her church, when you hear the words, "I'm going to say this to you with love" it is time to "look out for you are about to be hit square between the eyes." The motivation for correcting appears, in this text, not to be so

much about preserving the church but for preserving the wholeness of the individual who is disobedient. There seems to be no biblical record of Jesus refusing to associate with “disobeyers.” In fact, Jesus spent a lot of his time with “bad apples” (e.g. Matthew 9:11) and was often criticized for it. If indeed “one bad person” spoils the rest, Jesus would have been spoiled himself.

To each according to need; from each according to ability

Although forever connected with Karl Marx, these words were commonly used in socialist movements before he wrote them in 1875. It is a challenge to describe an entire socio-economic system in ten words. Might capitalism be “greed and let the chips fall where they may?” Anyone I’ve ever talked to who has travelled to Cuba comes back to say their cab driver or their beach waiter was a doctor who worked an extra job because doctors there don't make any more money than service personnel. And everyone who criticizes socialism will pull out this phrase and say that people in general are too lazy and too greedy to ever work simply to meet their needs. These ten simple words describe a vision of a fair and prosperous world. Whether or not it is vision that can be realized has been debated since the words were first spoken.

> Acts 4:32
> *Now the whole group of those who believed*
> *were of one heart and soul,*
> *and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions,*
> *but everything they owned was held in common.*

The early church lived by the principle of sharing work and wealth as equally as possible and the early church thrived; Luke connects these facts (Acts 4:33-35). At some point that prosperity ended. Is that where the church went wrong? For sure, living by these principles of radical sharing in our context would make an undeniable statement of trust in God rather than in any political system, or in any kind of "ism" for that matter.

Too many cooks spoil the broth

These words could be read as the opposite of “It takes a village [to raise a child]” or “Many hands make light work,” and is also akin to the anachronistic “Too many chiefs and not enough Indians.” Rather than argue for universality of any one stance, suffice to say that some situations call for teamwork, and others for the concentration and oversight of only one, or maybe a few.

> Proverbs 11:14
> *Where there is no guidance, a nation falls,*
> *but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.*

Typically, Hebrew poetry rhymes not with sound but with idea. Often you see an idea in one line repeated or amplified in the line that follows. This is the case with many of the proverbs. We are told both that a lack of guidance causes troubles and that an abundance of advisors creates safety. In this case the concern is the health of a nation. Again, this does not mean you can apply the need for many advisors to all situations. Rather, the need for the help and assistance of others must be assessed on a case by case basis depending on what you are doing. Making soup: no need. Raising a child: need.

Don’t go it alone

As advice for climbing a tall and wobbly ladder, this aphorism speaks of the value of partnerships and mutual support. Extended, it could be taken as proclaiming the value of communal collectives such as food-purchasing clubs or cooperative housing. Note the use of the word “don’t” which implies we actually have the choice to “go it alone” – a suggestion some would counter as being impossible, if not absurd. We are “going” with others whether we wish to or not. Given this understanding, the phrase might be restated, “Don't pretend you are going it alone because you are not alone, whether you like it or not.” Part of the problem of this phrase is that it holds irrespective of the value of project at hand. Such thinking is at the core of recruitment into organized crime activities. Petty thieves are recruited into much larger and more sinister operations to reap the economies of scale to be gained by “not going it alone.”

> 1 Kings 3:9-11
> *So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people*
> *and to distinguish between right and wrong.*
> *For who is able to govern this great people of yours?*
> *The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this.*
> *So God said to him, Since you have asked for this*
> *and not for long life or wealth for yourself,*
> *nor have asked for the death of your enemies*
> *but for discernment in administering justice,*

In this text, where King Solomon is speaking with God, the *not going it alone* refers explicitly to God's help. There is a story I love about a man shipwrecked on a deserted island praying to God for help. When a couple arrives in a sailboat and offers to take him to safety, he replies that he is

trusting in God to save him. When a naval ship comes by and calls him to board, he gives the same answer. Finally, when a helicopter hovers over him and calls by loudspeaker, he once again refuses, saying he has prayed and God will save him. The man dies from starvation and exposure. In the afterlife, he complains to God and God replies, “I tried to rescue you three times, and each time you refused my help.”

A chain is only as strong as its weakest link

Often this phrase refers to a person in a group or team; this meaning was reinforced with the once popular TV show, *The Weakest Link*. The aphorism originated in the 19th century. It referred to the links in an argument, suggesting that even the strongest of logical propositions lose their validity based on their weakest connections. The image is clear and meaningful, for we count on chains to work whether they are in our cars, on our fences, or part of our toilets. *The Tell Tale Rag*, written by G.W. Henry in 1861 speaks of a thousand-link chain that lifts us to heaven, but only one weak link will lead to its failure. It sits as a powerful call to attend to detail and more importantly, that focusing on one's strengths alone is a problem.

> 1 Thessalonians 5:14
> *And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers,*
> *encourage the fainthearted,*
> *help the weak, be patient with all of them.*

It is interesting that the New International Version of the Bible uses the word "warn," while the New Revised Standard Version uses "admonish." The Message uses "gently encourage." Such are the subtleties involved when translating a 2000-year-old document. The tone of the verse appears to be clearer with the phrase "Be patient with all of them." And while the tone of "You are the weakest link, goodbye" from the TV show was harsh, the Bible verse recognizes that, while some are weaker than others and could cost all, our approach needn't be unkind. Rather than getting rid of our weakest links, we should care for them. Countless people get credit for saying something akin to "The true test of a civilization is how it cares for its most vulnerable members." The only credible citation I could find was the dedication of the Hubert H. Humphrey Building, in

Washington DC on November 1, 1977, where Humphrey is quoted as:

> The moral test of government is how it treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the aged; and those in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped.

No man is an island

John Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions, and several steps in my Sickness* written in 1623 contains both the phrases “No man is an illand” and “For whom the bell tolls.” Unlike many of the quotations I chose for this book, where true origins are unknown or debatable, there is universal agreement that this is Donne's image. His assertion describes a major tension between conservative and liberal worldviews. Are we autonomous beings who make choices freely (conservative)? Or, are we incontestably a part of a whole (liberal) and unable to act in isolation? Should our responses deal with individuals (conservative) or society (liberal)?

> John 15:5
> *I am the vine, you are the branches.*
> *Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit,*
> *because apart from me you can do nothing.*

John Donne's words, in both their original context and common use, speak of how humanity is always in the processes of uniting and dividing. We cannot escape it because we are not unto ourselves and therefore we constantly need to seek new equilibrium with those we are in relationship with. Jesus' words are often reduced to speaking of the unity of humans with God, but such a reading misses the implicit human-to-human connection that the vine and branch image implies. Jesus’ words include the notion of our interconnectedness. There is no doubt that Jesus considers no one to be an island. What's more, he is in the centre of the island we are all part of, if not actually the island itself.

If you can't beat them, join them

Although commonly spoken in political contexts, these words are hard to apply in some settings. You can't really put on the other team's uniform during halftime at a football game. A superstar athlete can, however, forgo the best contract available to sign for less money with the team he thinks can win a championship. This idea of joining the opposition can describe a wide range of choices from minor compromise to total submission. In any form, these words speak directly in opposition to the thinking that “winners are winners and losers are losers.” As a correctional chaplain, it was within my mandate to provide pastoral care to staff. Very few reached out, as it would be seen as a sign of weakness. In fact, it seemed just as likely that officers would follow the phrase above by engaging in criminal behaviour such as bringing drugs in for the inmates. All staff were required to take a course called “anatomy of a set up” which warned of the dangers of sliding into the “if you can’t beat them, join them” camp.

> 1 Corinthians 1:9-10
> *We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did,*
> *and were destroyed by serpents.*
> *And do not complain as some of them did,*
> *and were destroyed by the destroyer.*

The “join ‘em if you can't beat ‘em” philosophy depends on the particular circumstances and the answers to a number of questions. The chief ones are: “Are you sure you can't beat them?” and “Is it even possible to join them?” A common biblical theme is that those called by God usually resist that calling. In giving this history lesson of Israel to the Corinthians, Paul is bringing this theme to mind. You will never defeat God with your idolatry, so you would do better to join with God in worship and prayer. Although Paul

does not answer the two questions explicitly his answer is implicit: You are not going to beat God, and you can join by saying a simple “yes” to God's invitation.

Look for the similarities rather than differences

In a BBC interview, when speaking of her move to San Francisco, author Isabel Allende said, “I have travelled all over the world and one thing that amazes me is that I can communicate with people. My story may be different but emotionally we are all the same. I tend to see the similarities in people and not the differences.” I can only imagine such a straightforward piece of advice must have ancient roots. Interestingly, Stephen Covey expresses the opposite sentiment when explaining the value of synergy: “Strength lies in differences not similarities.” As we still live in a world where mothers are the primary caregivers, girls most often grow up learning from someone of the same sex. Men often grow up learning from someone of the opposite sex. Women tend to learn by sameness; men generally learn by contrast. This might well be why some women are more often drawn to Allende and some men are more likely to read Covey.

> Romans 14:13-14
> *Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another.*
> *Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block*
> *or obstacle in your brother's way. As one who is in the Lord Jesus,*
> *I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself.*
> *But if anyone regards something as unclean,*
> *then for him it is unclean.*

The Romans passage could cut two ways on the issue of whether we ought to focus on similarities or differences. Verses like this teach that we have God as a judge who frees us from the task of judgment. We don't have to be threatened by others who are different than we are. We can choose not to focus on our differences and instead find

kinship in our similarities with others. Conversely, if we are not threatened by those who are different from us, we can embrace those differences and examine them without a need to prove ourselves right or another wrong. Such muscular engagement need not bruise us. We can embrace both difference and sameness as valid ways of knowing and learning. The passage in Romans can justify either path. There is value in learning by sameness and there is value in learning through difference. Each of has our own path and our own readiness.

One good turn deserves another

This is a restating of the Latin phrase, *quid pro quo*, which means, “two things exchanged for equal value.” The Latin version is often used in criminal court when explaining a plea bargain where both sides truly give something up and both sides truly gain something. *Quid pro quo* describes what *is* rather than what *ought* to be. In contrast, the word “deserves” in the proverb implies an appropriateness or obligation to repay something with equal value. A less formal way of saying it is “You scratch my back, and I’ll scratch yours.” Different cultures have different understandings. In the Gitxsan culture of northern British Columbia, gifts require, at some point, a return gift of even greater value. As an outsider, I was always hesitant to give gifts, as it obliged the receiver to pay me back with an even greater gift. Once I gave someone some money to help with repairs from a house fire. It was nearly a year later but they gave me a pair of shoes that were worth more than my gift. As they gave me the shoes, they said, “Thanks for your help” and it took me a while remember why they were thanking me. So many things around finance were radically different in that culture than my own that this was only one of many moments of confusion and education.

> Luke 6:31
> *Do to others as you would have them do to you.*

The phrase “One good turn deserves another” is not exactly a restating of “The Golden Rule” which appears not only in the Gospels but also in the teachings of practically every known religion. The difference is that Jesus speaks of an initiative rather than a reaction. It is as if he speaks of our actions as a “first strike,” to use militaristic language. “One good turn deserves another” is very much about a reaction that is "deserved" rather than a grace-filled choice to initiate goodness. As beautiful and simple as the Golden

Rule is, in practice it can be a little confusing. Does it mean that, if I loved macaroni and cheese beyond all things, I should serve it to anyone and everyone because of that? Isn't that a little bit like buying football gear for my wife who doesn't know a penalty kick from a field goal? Given it is a pretty universal habit to project our likes and dislikes onto other people, we need to exercise some caution when living out these, seemingly obvious, words.

It takes two to tango

There is universal acceptance of the notion that some things require a partnership of sorts. Marriage and boxing are examples. These words appear in the 1952 song by the same name, sung by Pearl Bailey. She pretends to exhaust the many things one can do on one's own but saves "the dance of love" as the one thing that requires two. Whenever this phrase is used, whether describing a hockey fight, nasty divorce proceedings or a criminal conspiracy, there is an underlying allusion to romantic love.

> Genesis 2:18
> *Then the Lord God said,*
> *"It is not good that the man should be alone;*
> *I will make him a helper as his partner."*

God created us for the other! We are social beings. Our life, our faith, all that we are is lived in relationship. This is the point of the second creation story. It is interesting that the word Hebrew word *ezer*, translated here as "helper" refers directly to God in other parts of the scriptures. Examples include Exodus 18:4, Deuteronomy 33:29, Psalm 33:20 and Psalm 115:9. The first woman is like a God! Eve is *like* God in that Eve was created for the other, as we all are! This is a helpful way of understanding what we mean when we use the phrase *created in God's image*. The constant message in scripture is that God made us for the other. It is a mutual relationship between all humans if not all creation, not simply that women were created for men. God knew it would take two to tango.

Two heads are better than one

In 1390, John Gower wrote an extended work on the seven deadly sins, *Confessio Amantis*, which contains the phrase "and tuo han more wit then on.” I believe in the truth of this phrase and put that belief into practice. I shared my early drafts with anyone who would read them for their comments.

> Ecclesiastes 4:9-11
> *Two are better than one,*
> *because they have a good reward for their toil.*
> *For if they fall, one will lift up the other;*
> *but woe to one who is alone and falls*
> *and does not have another to help.*
> *Again, if two lie together, they keep warm;*
> *but how can one keep warm alone?*

John Gower must have read the Bible rather than Solomon reading Gower considering the almost 2000-year lapse in time. Put simply: They agree. A sober second opinion is never a bad idea!

Death

Quakers are encouraged to "contemplate death . . . both their own and the death of those they are closest to."[20] Death is to be seen as a "fact"[21] and such an understanding is meant to set us free from fear and avoidance. Mourning and grief are not to be hidden and Quakers are led to embrace those who mourn.[22]

Quakers have even gone so far as to say the "great object of life is to prepare for death."[23]

Healthy preparation for death includes healthy appreciation of aging. Quakers are encouraged to "approach old age with courage and hope."[24]

Quakers encourage practicality in the realm of death and dying. "Do we arrange the practical matters (regarding possessions, location of documents, burial, etc.) that will arise when we die so that our families and Meeting are not unduly burdened?"[25] But this practicality is not at the expense of the spiritual and interpersonal. We are asked, "Are we comfortable with the relationships we will leave behind when we depart?"[26]

Many expressions touch up against death in order to give them added strength and meaning. A variety of examples follow.

Never say die

A great host of aphorisms call us to persistence. Don't give up this ship; don't halt before you are lame; hang in there; the darkest hour is just before dawn; while there is life, there is hope; always give people more than they expect; the expectations of life depend on diligence… These are but a few of many. “Never say die” manages to convey the same idea in three short words.

> Luke 23:46
> *Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands*
> *I commend my spirit.” Having said this, he breathed his last.*

While the Bible is full of teachings about perseverance, Jesus frequently says die. His own death is one of his most favoured teaching topics and he freely accepts his unjust death when it comes to him. He accepts defeat even unto death and asks us to follow him on that path. Without a real death, there is no resurrection. As believers in resurrection, Christians are invited to *always* say die and never to fear it. Jesus’ words on the cross echo Psalm 31:5 but have their own meaning in that context. Jesus utters them moments before death and deliverance. Jesus asks to be led *into* and *beyond* death as opposed to away from it. In fact, if you read Ernest Becker’s *The Denial of Death* you may well be convinced that the “never say die” myth is at the heart of evil.

You can kill a man but you can't kill an idea

This quote is most often attributed to Medgar Evers, a civil rights leader who was shot in the back in his own driveway in June of 1963. A variation is “You can kill a protest singer but you can't kill their lyrics.” The point is that what we are witness to is greater than ourselves. “Martyr,” *martus* in biblical Greek, actually means witness. The fact is that early Christians were arrested, imprisoned, tortured and even killed for their testimony. They were killed for witnessing. As such, the term “martyr” has come to mean just that.

> Matthew 10:28
> *Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul;*
> *rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*

The Gospel is predicated on the fact that the death of Jesus is not the end of the story. The victory that comes after death is essential. The resurrection defeats those who oppose the Gospel message. The idea that humility, generosity and peace will survive boastfulness, greed and war is part and parcel of the resurrection. Matthew was the only disciple to include the story of the slaughter of the innocents (Matthew 2:16-18) where Herod is threatened by the message of the Magi and, to retain his throne, orders the killing of all male infants in the vicinity of Bethlehem (commonly understood by historians to number about 20). With this story, Matthew introduces the idea that people believe they can solve problems by killing people. Jesus says a resounding *no* to such a claim.

You can't take it with you

This is a statement of (apparent) fact that the material possessions we might accumulate in our lives are no use to us when we die. It leaves open the question of where we might go when we die. It works equally well whether you believe that your body stays in the ground and that's the end of it, or that your spirit leaves your body and lives elsewhere, or that your body is resurrected in the future. AA members are familiar with the quote, "The only thing we take from this world when we leave it is what we gave away." This gives us a hint about what to do with the insight that we can't take *it* with us. In a similar vein, Boston-based marketing manager Aarti Khurana claims to have coined the phrase, "While you are alive collect moments not things, earn respect, not money and enjoy love, not luxuries."

> Matthew 6:19-20
> *But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven,*
> *where moth and rust do not destroy,*
> *and where thieves do not break in and steal.*

This teaching of Christ is echoed in 1 Timothy 6:7, "For we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it," as well as in other verses. The idea that our access to wealth does not survive us is not just a statement of fact but a preamble to an ethic. We are invited to be generous not only with our material wealth but with every ounce of our being. Pastors seeking sixty-five million dollars to buy a jet plane when the true lack of value of earthly treasures is so clearly identified ought to confuse outside observers of Christianity. And while this is an extreme example that most of us can easily distance ourselves from, the actual challenge likely hits home on a daily basis. I recall a children's story in which the preacher pulled out a charge card that had a hologram of a dove on it and said he used that as a reminder of the Holy Spirit being involved in

every penny he spent, or at least every time he used his charge card. Thirty years and counting and I still think of this as I pull my own card out.

Eat, drink and be merry

For an entire generation, these words were synonymous with the fast food chain, Dairy Queen. I still remember listening to a fellow student reading a Bible lesson in grade six and hearing the phrase and thinking the reader was a smart-ass sneaking a Dairy Queen ad into the Bible. The phrase has been brought into the present first as “wine, women and song” and then “sex, drugs and rock and roll.” The current generation has assumed an even tidier expression, used as a verb: Party!

> Luke 12:19
> *And I will say to my soul,*
> *Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years;*
> *relax, eat, drink, be merry.'*

While these words surely appear in the Bible, that does not mean it is advice to live by. In fact, the opposite appears true, as the words are followed by, “You fool!” These words are also included in the story of the “rich fool,” possibly citing Ecclesiastes 8:15 where they are offered with cynicism. The complacency they point to, where life is as happy and simple as eating ice cream, is a complacency that is a far cry from the call to “deny [ourselves] and take up [our] cross and follow Christ (Matthew 16:24).

Comedy equals tragedy plus time

While many comics and commentators have used this phrase, the website *QuoteInvestigator.com*, cites a 1957 *Cosmopolitan* interview with talk show host Steve Allen as the first recorded use of the phrase. Martin Dockery, a brilliant storyteller who works the fringe theatre circuit, uses this phrase creatively in his monologue, *Bursting into Flames*. He explains that the greatest and oldest tragedy in the world is the extinction of the dinosaurs. From there, he delivers a string of dinosaur jokes that prove, perhaps, that the equation tragedy + time = humour may not be easily quantified.

> Ecclesiastes 3:4
> *a time to weep, and a time to laugh*

While this verse from Ecclesiastes does not use the exact wording, it certainly contains tragedy and comedy; it can even be read that tragedy (weeping) comes *before* comedy (laughter). We often use the phrase “too soon” to describe a situation where there has not been a sufficient passage of time for humour. It can be thought of as simple respect, and the entertainment world has shown this to be the case. Both the David Letterman show following the 9-11 tragedy and Jon Stewart’s show after the mass shooting at the *Charlie Hebdo* newspaper in Paris are examples of major media stars showing this respect by offering shows void of humour.

All good things must come to an end

This proverb was first recorded in 1440 in the poem *Partenope of Blois*, “Ye wote wele of all thing moste be an ende.” Note that the word “good” is omitted. It is similar to “All things must pass,” “This too shall pass,” and “Here today, gone tomorrow,” all of which imply that the transient nature of life applies to both the good and the bad.

> Isaiah 40:6-8
> *A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?"*
> *All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field.*
> *The grass withers, the flower fades,*
> *when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;*
> *surely the people are grass.*
> *The grass withers, the flower fades;*
> *but the word of our God will stand forever.*

The prophet Isaiah begs to differ with this proverb. Not *all* things come to an end. It is only everything except The Word of the Lord. It is God’s Word alone that endures forever. One might even argue, by analogy, that such a lasting thing is something we *can* take with us when we die.

Every day is a gift. That is why they call it the present.

The last half of this quotation is one of many additions that follow the first half. These few words hold some common themes in this book and much spiritual writing. It speaks of the call to be present in the moment. It also speaks of the centrality of gratitude. And it ties those two concepts together with only five words.

> Psalm 118:24
> *This is the day that the Lord has made;*
> *let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

The Psalmist uses fifteen words to say what the “bumper sticker version” above accomplishes in five. The only difference is the explicit acknowledgement in the Psalm that God creates the day. Living each day rejoicing in the day is an enviable habit, and those who have this habit are usually very attractive to others. It is also a life unmarred by fear of potential death and decay. It is, however, a thought that comes more easily to those who live in protected privilege than those whose days are marked by isolation, exploitation and marginalization.

Graveyards are full of indispensable people

This adage is similar to “a little piece of churchyard fits everyone.” It speaks to our common fate of death and a reminder that none of us is irreplaceable nor indispensable. This is true even though we often believe ourselves to be both of those. I attended my 30th high school reunion and stood next to a classmate I had not spoken to since graduation. As we looked at a memorial wall of our classmates who had died, he casually said to me, "No surprises there," and I looked back in horror. He quickly clarified, explaining that he had heard of all the deaths. Fortunately, he was not saying what I understood him to mean, that they were all the "type" of people you would expect to die young. Sadly, this says more about me than it does about him.

> Genesis 3:19
> By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread
> until you return to the ground,
> for out of it you were taken;
> you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

I grew up in an era where it seemed an obligation for mothers to tell their children, “Even the Queen has to sit and pee.” It was the great equalizer: Having to relieve oneself was a human's fate whether you were the Queen of England or the lowest of society. Indeed, this verse from Genesis, often quoted in burial rituals, includes the same suggestion. Whenever we are tempted to think too much of ourselves, we are reminded that we are but mud until Spirit is breathed into us. The graveyard, like the toilet, awaits us all. At a recent Quaker meeting a Friend offered the following vocal ministry which puts a cosmic and delightfully positive spin. “We are all stardust. Carbon and oxygen, which we are all made of, are produced the explosion of stars.”

In the long run we are all dead

Economist John Maynard Keynes wrote in 1923 that the "long run is a misleading guide to current affairs. In the long run we are all dead. Economists set themselves too easy, too useless a task, if in tempestuous seasons they can only tell us, that when the storm is long past, the ocean is flat again." Keynes argues that the idea that long term stability in a market will eventually correct itself is a dangerous idea. He is saying that market instability causes real problems for real people, most obviously in unemployment and related poverty. His words are not about blindness to what happens in the future, as they are often interpreted, but rather a compassionate economics that responds to real needs in the here and now.

> Psalm 39:4-5
> *Lord, let me know my end, and what is the measure of my days;*
> *let me know how fleeting my life is.*
> *You have made my days a few handbreadths,*
> *and my lifetime is as nothing in your sight.*
> *Surely everyone stands as a mere breath.*

The Psalmist is desperate here. His prayer ends, "Turn your gaze away from me, that I may smile again, before I depart and am no more." He sees clearly that we are all to die, not only in the long run but in the short run, and his desperation leads him to value the day, to value each and every moment of life. Like Keynes, who did not want to be distracted by the long run in the face of immediate suffering, the Psalmist cried to God in impatience, despite being well versed and full of teachings about patience and trust in God's eventual deliverance.

Equity, Equality and Fairness

Quakers have become known for their refusal to use titles, their use of the words “thee” and “thou” and refusing to tip one’s cap to any particular class of person. These habits arise out of the testimony to equality and although it is rare for a Quaker to live out these particular practices today, the testimony is alive and well. “People everywhere are children of God and members of one family.”[27]

Quakers are to speak to or “respond to . . . that of God” in all people[28] and link their failure to do so to their involvement in discrimination, oppression and injustice. Human rights such as “the right of every individual to be loved, cared for, and educated appropriately, to obtain useful employment; and to live in dignity” are central in Quaker values.[29]

Quakers are encouraged to seek “to know persons of all ages and at all stages of their personal journey.”[30] Both children and elders are recognized and included in ways that broader society often fails to do. Quakers are asked, “How do you share your deepest beliefs” with children?[31] The value of advanced age is seen to include its own “serenity, detachment and wisdom” that we can all benefit from.[32]

If any thought is common to all Quakers, it is that the “basic trust in the Light within leads to our trust in the inherent dignity and sacredness of each person.”[33] Equality follows naturally.

The challenge to see the world through the lens of equality is addressed by the phrases and aphorisms that follow.

When the sun rises, it rises for everyone

Universally reported as a “Cuban Proverb” and rarely attributed to any individual, these words make a radical claim on equality of all. Presumably it stops at all people but broadens the idea of “everyone” to include all creation. Similar proverbs can be found in many other cultures. One of my proudest moments as a correctional chaplain was when my performance review noted my fault in “seeing the jail in terms of us and them.” I wondered out loud, in rebuttal, if maybe I saw it that way because that was the way it was. I wasn’t sure why I drew that conclusion, I mused in my defence, maybe it was the uniforms, or maybe it was the locks and bars. Forgive my sarcasm. While the sun rises for everyone, jail is one place where everything that can possibly be done *is* done to ensure that people do not experience the freedom of equality.

> 1 Corinthians 15:28
> *When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself*
> *will also be subjected to the one who put all things*
> *in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all.*

The proverb speaks very much in the present as it describes, with delightful simplicity, what is. The Bible verse puts this radical equality into the future. Depending on your sense of time within God's realm, that may not make much difference. As the proverb yields the warning to be careful to not consider ourselves any better than anyone else, the implication of these words to the church in Corinth goes further, explicitly telling the church in Corinth that all things, including people, will be under God.

Children should be seen and not heard

In his satirical 1729 essay, *A Modest Proposal*, Jonathan Swift wrote:

> I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child, well nursed, is at a Year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome Food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled, and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a Fricassee, or a Ragout.

Swift offers a rather severe extrapolation of the idea that "children should be seen and not heard." I recently had a fortune cookie that read, "A truly great man never puts away the simplicity of the child." If we never hear children, how can we learn from them?

> Matthew 19:13-14
> *Then little children were brought to Jesus for him*
> *to place his hands on them and pray for them.*
> *But the disciples rebuked those who brought them.*
> *Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me,*
> *and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven*
> *belongs to such as these."*

Matthew, Mark (10:13-16) and Luke (18:15-17) all relate the story of the little children although Mark and Luke include the teaching that adults should be childlike in their approach to the Kingdom. In the cultural setting in which the story is told, the disciples were "right." Again, Jesus is "breaking the mould" and "turning the world upside down." Not only should children be seen and heard, they should be front and centre. This is yet one more example of Jesus aligning himself with the dispossessed. Sadly, my experience in the prison system is that the experience of

neglect as a child is almost universal. What's more, that experience is often understood as normal and expected.

What is good for the goose is good for the gander

While the common take on this phrase is the equality of all, the use of goose and gander actually speaks of equality between the sexes. The word “sawce” (sauce) rather than “good” appears in John Ray's 1670 *Collection of English Proverbs*. While we think of the quote as being about what the goose or gander is consuming, it appears it originally referred to how the goose or gander was consumed – a different meaning, particularly if you are the proverbial cooked goose! The phrase reduces to absurdity in any case, as not all things have equal “goodness” for all people. Peanuts are, for me, a tasty snack. For two of my brothers, eating peanuts guarantees anaphylactic shock and jeopardizes their lives.

> James 2:1-3
> *My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favouritism*
> *really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?*
> *For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in,*
> *and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say,*
> *“Have a seat here, please,” while to the one who is poor you say,*
> *“Stand there,” or, “Sit at my feet . . .”*

Other translations make it even clearer. They use the simple wording, “Treat everyone the same” instead of the more obscure references to favouritism. If the phrase, “What's good for the goose is good for the gander” simply promotes the notion of fairness and equity, then surely James 2 is only one of several passages in scripture that holds up impartiality as a universal good. Deuteronomy 1:16-17,

Leviticus 19:15 and Acts 10:34 are three examples among many others that promote equality.

You can't have your cake and eat it too

Not only is the precise first appearance of these words up for debate, phrases which seem to have similar intent, but use different images, appear in many languages and cultures. For instance, the French say, “You want butter, and the money of the butter” or Italians speak of “having your wine cask full, and your wife drunk.” These aphorisms all play on a situation where you clearly have two choices but are forced into one *or* the other. You cannot select *both*; you can't have it both ways.

> Proverbs 19:21
> *The human mind may devise many plans,*
> *but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established.*

So much of Christian spirituality distils down to surrendering control and outcome. So much of our broken life is attributable to trying to control and contain life itself, when life is to be lived rather than harnessed. The addicts I have worked with get this – they have seen the folly of their attempts to control others and themselves. For some, that realization can take a long time but it does come. Sadly, many perish before this happens. For many of us, the simple words of Proverbs 19:21 do not easily filter into our lives, and we trust in our own wiles rather than in God's provision and purpose. To return to the original phrase, not only can we not have our cake and eat it too, but we have no control over the cake: Cake, itself, is ultimately a gift from God, and to eat our cake is to give thanks for that gift.

One man's loss is another man's gain

Cited as first used in English in 1527, this saying has enjoyed many evocative variations since then. In his song *Hank Williams Said It Best*, Guy Clark offers 48 different plays on the phrase. Because the phrase has been used in so many contexts, its meaning is varied and ambiguous. Does it mean that we live in a kind of zero-sum world where we have to define winners and losers in all cases? In the game of Monopoly, for instance, does one player gain and another lose in each trade? Does this phrase deny the possibility of “win-win” solutions? Or does it mean that perception is everything and that what one person perceives a loss, another can perceive as a gain? Similar phrases are “One person’s meat is another person’s poison” and “One person’s trash is another’s treasure.”

> Luke 2:10
> *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see -*
> *I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:*

The Luke verse speaks to the second understanding I noted above. Namely that we can perceive the world in a win-loss dichotomy if we so choose. Shortly after the pronouncement of good news in Luke we hear of all the changes that are to come, including the tumbling of the mighty and the freedom of the oppressed. While this is truly good news to the downtrodden, the comfortable cannot possibly see that they are being led to a new and unimaginably greater way of living. The interpretation that we live in a zero-sum world where we must have losers if we have winners, is simply not supported by the Bible. Conversely, a theology of abundance is always proclaimed. It starts with the gift of Creation as described in Genesis One; it is then echoed throughout the Bible, with Psalm 104 being perhaps the

most delightfully poetic echo of the Creation story. However, it often takes time to realize that when “the world is turned upside down” it can be a great gift.

All is fair in love and war

“All policy's allowed in war and love” are the closing words of Act 1 in Susanna Centlivre's 1706 play, *Love at a Venture*. A much earlier expression of the sentiment “All is fair in love and war” is found in poet John Lyly's novel *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit,* published in 1578. The novel recounts the romantic adventures of a wealthy and attractive young man, and includes the quote, “The rules of fair play do not apply in love and war.” These words are usually used to justify extraordinary actions in the contexts of love and war. I remember meeting with a guy who was doing a 21-year sentence for attempted murder of a Hell’s Angels member. He was an unaffiliated drug dealer and the motorcycle club was attempting to shut him down from selling in their area of the city. He complained to me, “Their area? I lived my whole life there! And 21 years? It was not like the guy was a civilian!” Clearly, he was appealing to the above adage to say that fighting over drug territory means that “all is fair,” even killing people.

> Leviticus 19:18
> *You shall not take vengeance*
> *or bear a grudge against any of your people,*
> *but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.*

This verse comes from a longer section in Leviticus which spans from chapters 16 to 20 and provides specific legal pronouncements on all kinds of matters. The New International Version of the Bible subtitles chapter 19 as “Various Laws.” While love and war are not covered explicitly, verse 18 stands out as the most broadly defined of all the laws decreed over the five chapters. Leviticus 19:18 commands us to exclude vengeance or even bearing a grudge. If something as simple as bearing a grudge is not “fair,” then many things must *not* be “fair in love and war.”

The Bible can be used to either support or refute the ethics implied by this adage.

There is nothing a little hard work can't accomplish

How one reacts to these words gives quite a few clues about who they are. My hunch is that successful people are more likely to agree with the phrase. Less successful people will be more motivated to consider the roles of innate talent, influence, connections, opportunity, luck and other factors. What strikes me as problematic with this phrase is that it implies that anyone who has fallen short of an accomplishment was not working hard enough. In so many settings there can be only one winner and sometimes natural skill, ability, insight and experience weigh heavily against effort. For example, “a little hard work” alone cannot accomplish a win in every sporting event. Only one team gets to win.

> Acts 10:34
> *Then Peter began to speak to them:*
> *"I truly understand that God shows no partiality,*
> *but in every nation anyone who fears him*
> *and does what is right is acceptable to him.*

While I have shared my hesitations about giving “hard work” more than its due, I think there are even greater problems with the idea that hard work earns the favour of God and that God is the mediator between hard work and success. This flies in the face of the definition of grace in which reward is offered free regardless of merit. And Peter makes it pretty clear that God does not choose favourites, based on hard work, lack of hard work or any other criteria. We should not expect membership in the “the hard work society” to curry favour with God.

Foresight

“Depending on God’s guidance” daily is common advice for Quakers.[34] For many, the core of silent worship is “bow[ing] to the power of God.”[35]

Quakers understand that guidance from God may take many forms. This includes but is not limited to “the prayerful support of others joined with you in worship.”[36] To ensure proper reflection, Quakers ask “What unpalatable truths might you be evading?”[37] Answers to such questions are best discerned with the clarity of supportive Friends.

Quaker activism is marked by attention not only to injustices but to the causes of injustice.[38] Quakers are expected to have considered responses marked by foresight.

Quakers are anything but foolhardy. Being open to the Spirit’s leading does not mean dismissing serious and effective consideration. Quakers are asked to distinguish “inspiration from impulse, insight from temptation [and] patience from laziness.”[39]

Sometimes foresight is a proactive choice. Other times it is a reaction to changes in circumstances. Most of the sayings that follow hold up the value of both, while a few speak to the value of risk and of grasping opportunity when it comes your way.

Rome was not built in a day

This assertion can be found in French in a collection of proverbs from 1190. Dickens's fans would know the term from his novel, *David Copperfield*. It is a colourful call to patience, with particular respect to large projects. The less quoted second half of the proverb, “but it burned down in one” makes the point all the stronger.

> Romans 8:25
> *But if we hope for what we do not see,*
> *we wait for it with patience.*

The promise is given in the following verse that the “Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words” when we do not know for what or how to pray. It is almost as if the Spirit can be patient for us when we can't be. In either case, we have all been told, at some point in our lives, that patience is a virtue.

Before engaging your mouth, put your mind in gear

This proverb exists with many variations. One of the shortest forms is the teaching to “think before you speak.” Such wisdom applies to a number of issues including the power of words to hurt and our internal power to control what we say. It implies a biological claim that our mind has control over our mouth, and while that is quite supportable, the frequency with which our mouths appear to act “independently” might cause us to cast our biological assumptions aside.

> Job 6:24
> *Teach me, and I will be silent;*
> *make me understand how I have gone wrong.*

This verse is found within Job's extended reply to Eliphaz. Eliphaz has told the greatly afflicted Job (Job 5:17-19), “Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. For he wounds, but he also binds up; he injures, but his hands also heal. From six calamities he will rescue you; in seven no harm will befall you.” In his reply, Job has reached his wit's end. He is unaware of having committed any sin for which he deserves punishment. Suffice to say: Job 6:24 strongly affirms that silence gives us space to hear what we need to hear.

No pain, no gain

While similar ideas can be traced as far back as the second century, it was Jane Fonda's workout videos of the early eighties that gave this phrase its prominent place in our vocabulary. In the poem *Virtue is Sensible of Suffering* written in the 1600s, Robert Herrick writes about a strong man who can carry a heavy load while being quite aware of his pinches and pains. A playful take on these words "No grain, no pain" is used by those promoting gluten free diets or instructing young children with celiac disease on what not to eat.

> Romans 8:22-23
> *We know that the whole creation*
> *has been groaning in labour pains until now;*
> *and not only the creation, but we ourselves,*
> *who have the firstfruits of the Spirit,*
> *groan inwardly while we wait for adoption,*
> *the redemption of our bodies.*

These verses are in the context of Paul instructing the faithful to focus on God and God's work rather than on one's own abilities and accomplishments. The likening of God's unfolding plan for salvation to childbirth is meant to encourage us to see pain and hardship as not only transitional but unavoidable. We are encouraged to “stand on the promises” in the face of all that would distract us. Pain is offered as a sign that we are giving birth to something new and greater than what we know. Gain is to follow pain.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure

A more vivid expression is “He who repairs not his gutters repairs his whole house.” It talks about the value of investment up front. It is akin to politicians advocating for funding for social needs such as education, healthcare and infrastructure. The follower of this advice invests in the present, to avoid greater costs in the future. The expression implies that the pound of cure is 16 times the worth of an ounce of prevention. While not to be taken literally, it implies the decision should not be a difficult one. For those who are confused with weights and measures outside of the metric system, this phrase can be shortened to “prevention is far better than cure.”

> Philippians 4:6-7
> *Do not worry about anything,*
> *but in everything by prayer and supplication*
> *with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*
> *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,*
> *will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

While the Bible certainly contains many verses about the value of forbearance, there are also many that seem to tell people not to plan ahead, to live in the moment instead, because God will provide. There is a fine line between prudent planning and worthless worrying. Often we cannot even tell the two apart. And the advice of others may not always be clear either. My yoga teacher describes her preparation as "Plan plan plan, pray pray pray.” One does not have to set up planning and praying as opposites. God can be in both our thoughts *and* our plans, and we can commit those to God in prayer. Animal rights activist and yoga teacher Sharon Gannon says, “My practice is

something I do for God. Period.” With these words she overcomes the false dichotomy of prayer and preparation.

If at first you do not succeed, try, try again

This sounds like a never-ending variation on the adage “three times [is] a charm.” Both are invitations to “stay the course” and not give up when you face opposition. They all imply that the future will be positive as effort will always find its reward. An early, although unlikely the first, use of the words can be found in an 1840s teaching manual written by Thomas H. Palmer:

> As, then, perseverance is not, naturally, the virtue of youth, it is the more incumbent on instructors to take efficient measures for exciting and promoting it. The words, ‘Try; try again’ should be inscribed in some conspicuous situation in the schoolroom, and the pupil's attention directed to them, in every case of difficulty.

In Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream,* Lysander applies this idea to love in an indirect way: “The course of true love never did run smooth.” Part of foresight is trusting in perseverance.

> Galatians 6:9
> *So let us not grow weary in doing what is right,*
> *for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.*

This verse is bracketed by a string of imperatives that call attention to the importance of faithful living and respect for all others. The verse goes beyond the various sayings, as it defines success as “doing good.”

What doesn't kill you makes you stronger

This oft-quoted phrase is attributed to philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. He sets out a number of maxims in his 1888 essay, *Twilights of the Idols*. His essay was described on the cover of the Oxford University House printing as a "declaration of war . . . on eternal idols," and suggests how "we confuse our pleasure . . . for truth." Phrases such as this one reflect "our desire to be rid of . . . unpleasant uncertainty" such as whether or not suffering will lead to strength or to further suffering, pain or even death. Nietzsche was cynical and critical of this phrase and yet his words have been grabbed and reoffered by many as if he had spoken it as wisdom and truth. Nietzsche aside, adhering to this belief sustains many through difficult times. Although often used by inmates in perilous situations, it often includes a short question at the end. Right? It is as if they are saying it and hoping it will true rather than believing or trusting that it is.

> 1 Peter 5:10
> *And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace,*
> *who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ,*
> *will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you.*

The main problem with the phrase above is that some things *do* kill us. Pain is often a warning to us to choose another path. For example, we learn not to touch hot stoves by touching a hot stove once. It doesn't kill us, and while the knowledge that a hot stove can burn us could "make us stronger" there are usually other ways to achieve such ends. I knew a woman with a genetic abnormality causing her to lack feeling in her extremities. Because of this she had broken every one of her fingers and toes, and had burned herself on countless occasions. She longed for the

pain and suffering that would protect her. The biblical message is to never think suffering is its own end nor ought we take false pride in suffering. While we read that Christ will “restore, support, strengthen and establish,” we should be careful not to pretend we fully understand how we might experience that in any given situation.

A stitch in time saves nine

Interestingly, some of the earliest instances of this phrase include the word “may”: “A stitch in time may save nine.” Not surprisingly, “may” was dropped as, although it is more defensible, it sounds weaker and has less punch. Perhaps there is a challenge in that alone: Is sacrificing truth and accuracy for strength a habit we wish to cultivate? Undoubtedly the phrase was literal at first: Sew up a small rip and you could save yourself a major repair later. Now it can refer to any kind of effort best done in a timely way. Those who grew up in the sixties will remember the Fram oil filter ads with the catchphrase “You can pay me now, or you can pay me later.” I grasp phrases from the past because our increasingly disposable society tends not to promote this value. However, the significance of planning ahead still stands as tall as Bill Gates, who said in very plain terms, when talking about the spread of AIDS, “Treatment without prevention is unsustainable.”

> Proverbs 2:10
> *. . . for wisdom will come into your heart,*
> *and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul*

The Bible consistently tells us that wisdom is not achieved, but is received as a gift from God. Wisdom can be likened to the "timely stitching" that God does in our lives. Yes, it is a good idea to repair a rip in a garment or use a quality oil filter or be prudent in any number of ways. It is also true that prudence and discretion are skills that can be taught, learned and developed. This is the way that God bestows the gift of wisdom on us. Even when we have worked hard to develop the ability to plan ahead and prepare for good choices, we can still interpret that all things, including our inherent abilities, are gifts. This is yet another opportunity for the faithful to “give thanks in all circumstances” (1

Thessalonians 5:18) while having the foresight to make choices based on delayed gratification.

Look before you leap

Similar advice comes in the form, “Look both ways before you cross the street.” Aesop tells two fables that speak of the wisdom of attention before action. *The Two Frogs* and *The Fox and The Goat*. In the first, the two frogs come across a well when it was hot out and, although they first thought they should hop in for the cool water, they reconsidered when they realized they would have no way out. They looked before they leapt and, in doing so, spared their lives. In *The Fox and the Goat* we again have a well of cool water in a time of scarcity. In this story, however, the fox is trapped in the well and invites the goat down to join him. Once the goat jumps in, the fox climbs on top of the goat and is able to jump out of the well by jumping off the goat's horns, leaving the goat behind. The goat did not look before leaping. A common phrase I heard from inmates was, “I was in the wrong place at the wrong time” and while that could have occurred randomly, in most instances, looking before leaping might have prevented it.

> Revelation 3:20
> *Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking;*
> *if you hear my voice and open the door,*
> *I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.*

I could have chosen any number of verses for this adage, such as the call or the first disciples (Mark 1:16-19) or the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:34-40) that refer to counting the cost of discipleship. But I chose this one as it seems to imply the opposite of “Look before you leap.” Jesus stands and knocks, and asks that the door be opened so he can be welcomed in. There is no talk about assessment of what that means; the hearers are asked to leap without looking. Or perhaps that discussion is delayed until their stomachs are full?

Cross that bridge when you come to it

No source can be found for this proverb, which likely has ancient origins. It means that “some things can wait” and stands, in some ways, as the opposite of “seize the day.” The band, *Status Quo*, built a song around the phrase and sang about their coming fame and fortune and the problems it might bring, but within the song they decide not to be overwhelmed by such thoughts and not only wait to “cross that bridge when [they] come to it" but “burn [that] bridge” once they cross over. There is a strong sense that this saying is meant to encourage us to live in the moment rather than be distracted in the uncertainties of the future. As a chaplain in a pre-trial detention centre, I dealt people with *huge bridges* before them. Some could not stop obsessing and it was all they could talk about. Others saw it as completely beyond their control and lived out this phrase with near perfection. If I could put the causes of those two responses into bottles, I could probably become a millionaire.

> Romans 14:12
> *So then, each of us will be accountable to God.*

The Bible cautions us that there will come a time when we will make our account to God. So why do we step in for God and hold people accountable? Why do we do God's work without being asked? Whether it is our own accounting or another's, God’s promise is that God will make the time. We can wait. We can cross that bridge when, or more correctly, *if* we come to it.

Forgiveness

Quakers seek the ability to exercise and receive forgiveness. Quakers are encouraged to "cherish an understanding forgiving spirit"[40] and to take actions for reconciliation "promptly."[41]

Quakers are asked, "Have you individually, through repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, experienced true conversion of heart?"[42] Similar questions are also asked of the Meeting as a whole. "What does the consistent remembrance and awareness of Jesus' sacrificial forgiveness motivate your Meeting to do to express that same loving grace to one another and to people beyond the church?"[43]

To proceed through life with "the peaceable spirit of the Light of Truth with forbearance and warm affection for each other"[44] with "tender sympathy"[45] is to live with an ever readiness to forgive. Working towards forgiveness is not optional. It is the way of the Inner Light. The Light helps Quakers "recognize [their] imperfection as being part of being human" which helps them to "be generous in . . . forgiveness of other people." [46]

Quakers are advised to live in constant expectation of their own "need for forgiveness and grace"[47] and the opportunity they have to be "a channel for God's love and forgiveness."[48] They are also advised to work for "the redemption and improvement of human life."[49]

For the most part, the proverbs and catchphrases below speak of the value of forgiveness. Many go beyond that and speak of how to overcome or otherwise respond to the challenges to forgiveness.

To err is human; to forgive (is) divine

Alexander Pope's 1711 poem, *An Essay on Criticism,* contains these words. Without any context, he appears to stand down on whether this is to be forever to be the case or if it is possible that this chasm be bridged. In fact, a few lines prior, Pope writes, “Contending Wits becomes the Sport of Fools,” implying that humans are generally debased and incapable. These words are followed with, “in Noble Minds some Dregs remain,” implying that we are never pure and that our humanity impedes our ability to forgive. Yet further into the poem, Pope writes, “Be silent always when you doubt your Sense,” implying that, if not a universal truth, the human default is judgment and separation rather than forgiveness and unity. Credit could be given to St. Augustine, Cicero and others who spoke similar words. The phrase is often used in the abbreviated form, "To err is human."

> John 20:21-23
> *Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you.*
> *As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”*
> *When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,*
> *“Receive the Holy Spirit.*
> *If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them;*
> *if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”*

These verses make it clear that forgiveness is a power that comes from God, and humanity is empowered to share it. It is not that humanity ascends to the Godly quality of being able to forgive. These three verses agree with Alexander Pope but go beyond the short phrase that is so commonly known. The great chasm between *our* ability and *God's* ability to forgive is not denied, but it is reconciled through God's initiative.

Turn the other cheek

The idea of offering up another cheek after being hit on one is recorded in the Sermon on Plain in Luke and the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew.

> Matthew 5:39
> *But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer.*
> *But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also.*

Sadly, people often take this phrase to say we should be "human doormats" and let injustice roll over us. This interpretation leads people to ignore the words, to seeing them inapplicable in any real context. Our society does not embrace this idea. "May the best man win," "Stand your ground," and countless other phrases provide the opposite advice. However, there is a middle ground of understanding. In the biblical culture of the East, the left hand, used to clean one's private parts, was considered sinister and would not be used for hitting someone. Given that, the implication is that a strike to the right cheek is a right-handed backhand. A backhanded hit is not a hit between equals but a hit from a superior to an inferior. As it was explained to me, it is how a man would hit a woman or child. As such, turning the other cheek is not "rolling over and playing dead." Rather, it means you may hit me but you must do it as an equal; I will not lose my dignity. This understanding makes such a choice one of courageous defiance. It is not even an act of forgiveness. It becomes a classic example of civil disobedience. Not only can we follow this teaching of Jesus', we can change the world by doing so. A common phrase among the criminal subculture is "Don't mistake my kindness for weakness." While the context and implications are different, there is certainly a lot of overlap between the Bible verse and those gentle sounding words of threat to harm.

To be forgiven we must forgive

These words stand as an interpretation of a number of verses in the Bible, depending on translation, that has been embraced by the Twelve Step movement and others. The use of the word “must” implies a condition which could yield forgiveness that was coerced. Many would say that coerced forgiveness is impossible, that it is not true forgiveness. One immediately thinks of the adult telling two children in the playground to “kiss and make up” when neither one is anywhere close to holding that sentiment.

> Matthew 18:34-35
> *In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured,*
> *until he should pay back all he owed.*
> *“This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you*
> *unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”*

These verses do not appear to speak of forgiveness as an act of grace or goodness, but as a command to be lived out under threat. They come at the conclusion of a parable that points to the value of treating others with forgiveness when you have received the same. Some scholars would state these are clearly not the words of Jesus, and while the original story found in Matthew likely circulated independently, an editor added the conclusion in verse 35 for emphasis. Going back to the use of the word “must” in the catchphrase, you can ask: Is that forgiveness a moral imperative, or a simple statement of fact or natural law? Armed with that notion, if you read the entire parable in Matthew 18, you see that this is not God playing “tit for tat,” but rather allowing a natural law to reveal itself. Forgiveness flows from God to humans to other humans. If we don't acknowledge, accept and celebrate our own forgiveness we don't have any to give out. In the parable of

Matthew 18:21-35, the central character is forgiven an enormous debt and later reacts with no compassion to a relatively minute sum. It is clear he never experienced the mercy but thought he deserved the debt and that his promise to “pay back everything” was taken seriously. Grace was left out of the equation by the receiver, but was at the heart of the decision of the true giver of forgiveness.

Always forgive your enemies but never forget their names

John F. Kennedy is usually credited with these words. It holds a sentiment similar to the better known, “Keep your friends close, and your enemies closer.” It stands as the antithesis to “forgive and forget.” While you might forgive someone for a particular action, it doesn’t mean you’re unaware that they might act in the very same way again. Very early in my professional career I facilitated a group of “non-offending parents” in cases of incest. It was usually mothers, but if the perpetrator was a sibling, grandparent or other relative then both parents could be there. Thirty years later, I realize what a difficult role that was. My co-facilitator and I had two messages to deliver: Don't burden yourself with your own guilt for trusting this person, and, at the same time, learn from this experience so you never put your children in the same vulnerable situation again. While the family member who perpetrated the abuse may not have been seen as an “enemy,” we were conveying what these words attributed to Kennedy mean. We were asking for two seemingly contradictory responses. The navigation in this situation was a challenge.

> Luke 6:37
> *Do not judge, and you will not be judged;*
> *do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.*
> *Forgive, and you will be forgiven*

On my first date with my wife, in the spring of 1987, we went to hear TV personality Ed Asner and theologian Blase Bonpane talk about Latin American politics. We both remember Bonpane saying, “It is impossible not to judge. I make a thousand judgments every day starting with what to wear and what to eat and going from there.” Immediately I wanted to agree, embrace his words and return to the Bible. I read Luke 6:37 again and decided there was a difference

between judgment and condemnation. Judgment is naming an action right or wrong, or good or bad but condemnation is taking action by considering the judgment final. Trying to live without judgment is not possible. Do I start the day with tea, coffee or hot water? Should I wake up at seven or eight? Do I eat meat? That very day, I ceased any abstract commitment to living without judgments. However, I am very careful to try to avoid condemnations.

It is easier to get forgiveness than permission

This is commonly called Stuart's Law of Retroaction. While the concept is no doubt older, it is commonly attributed to Grace Hopper, a US naval rear admiral and pioneer in computer programming. While gentle on the ear, it is akin to the less than gentle Machiavellian notion that one is free to do as they wish, to suit their own best ends.

> Psalm 51:17
> *The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;*
> *a broken and contrite heart,*
> *O God, you will not despise.*

The contrite heart the Psalmist speaks of is meant for God. It is to be a way of life and not something reserved for the altar or isolated moments of prayer. The idea that forgiveness is an afterthought for something you did without regard for consequences flies in the face of living from a heartbroken place. Such scheming is anything but contrite! This is why couched apologies that begin with the words “if anyone was offended,” are not received as genuine. They *are* not genuine! While the world may reward such manipulation, the Psalmist makes it clear what God desires from us: genuine brokenness for the hurt we cause. God prefers us to seek wisdom and direction in advance than to simply trust in forgiveness before acting.

Forgive and forget

This common phrase is associated with a whole host of people. In a 2014 song by *The Kooks,* someone tells a former partner that he has moved on and he asks her to do the same; he both forgives her and forgets her. The same words are more often used in the opposite way, to say my forgiveness is so complete, I have no memory of the wrong. So, there is a true "clean slate." Such use can be found in Shakespeare's *King Lear* Act 4 Scene *vii* and other literary classics. And physician Norman Cousins is quoted as saying: "I have learned that life is an adventure in forgiveness. Nothing clutters the soul more than remorse, resentment, recrimination."

> Luke 23:34
> *Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them;*
> *for they do not know what they are doing."*
> *And they cast lots to divide his clothing.*

These words of Jesus are echoed whenever we say, "Don't take it personally." In Luke 23:34, Jesus could be talking about everyone who had conspired and allowed him to be crucified. He knows the people are ignorant and in need of forgiveness. He does not consider the people putting him to an unjust death as being evil, in need of retribution. If Jesus is willing to forgive while facing a violent, mean spirited, corrupt and unjust execution, then where do we justify acting on righteous anger or instinct for self protection? Lest I be unclear, I will answer that question: We don't!

Two wrongs don't make a right

To live by these words is harder than it is to say them. The classic image is of a parent hitting a child in response to his hitting of another child. This calls to mind the other well-known phrase, “Don't do as I do, do as I say” a delightful confession of how common such inconsistency, if not outright hypocrisy, is. Often, we see these words as how one attacks or criticizes another for doing the wrong thing. Much less frequently we hear these words as part of a confession when someone acknowledges that they have just repeated another person’s error. The phrase "Fight fire with fire" provides the opposite wisdom to "Two wrongs don't make a right." When a parent hits their child as punishment for fighting, they are employing the "fight fire with fire" approach. A central part of any correctional plan for someone doing a federal prison sentence is to demonstrate victim awareness. In some cases, such as an assault, this is relatively obvious. It is less clear in cases such as drug trafficking. What I often heard from arrested drug dealers is, “If I wasn’t selling them the drugs, then somebody else would be,” as if to say, “Two wrongs do make a right.” A better answer is required in order for one to get released any time before one’s warrant expiry date.

> Exodus 21:23-25
> *If any harm follows, then you shall give life for life,*
> *eye for eye, tooth for tooth,*
> *hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn,*
> *wound for wound, stripe for stripe.*

I have included all three verses for those who think this Biblical law only applies to teeth and eyes. I was a huge fan of TV wrestling as a child and I still remember Mad Dog Vachon giving a great interview. A favourite line was, “It will be eye for eye and toot for toot.” Even as a child, I knew that AWA wrestling was not the best place to look for moral

teaching, even if they were quoting the Bible! If you are interested, keep on reading the verses that follow in Exodus as they describe a number of caveats and sub-clauses. Of course, Jesus appears to move us beyond such thinking when he declares that such retributive justice is not his way (Matthew 5:38-48). Jesus makes the point that two wrongs don't make a right, and that such vengeful thinking, let alone action, fails to usher in his Reign.

Friendship

Quakers are known as Friends because of their belief in an egalitarian structure. Quakers express this “capital F” Friendship by exercising equal authority in community life and seeking to avoid hierarchical or coerced relationships. Neither is friendship to be confused with popularity or simply fitting in. To that end, Quakers are advised to “not let the desire to be sociable, or the fear of seeming peculiar, determine [their] decisions.”[50]

Quakers also understand friendships to be beautiful and powerful[51] and Quakers experience, in friendship, that which is of God in others. This means that Quaker fellowship is meant to realize “the oneness of humanity under God.”[52] As such, engaging in authentic friendships is an essential part of the Quaker life. Friendships that have integrity and authenticity require depth. Quakers are advised to “know one another in things which are eternal [and to] bear the burden of each other’s feelings.”[53] As Quakers follow opportunities to enter “into the joys and sorrows of each other’s lives” there is hope for intimacy and the many gifts that come with intimacy. With this in mind, Quakers are reminded to “cherish Friendships” and to keep in mind that “when we love, we may risk hurt as well as finding joy.”[54]

Quakers are asked to “make [their] home a place where friendship, peace and refreshment of spirit may be found.”[55]

Friendship is a choice that is enabled by a variety of skills, sensibilities and practices. These include, but are certainly not limited to “prayer, perseverance and a sense of humour.”[56]

The sayings which follow offer a wide range of interpretations and commentary on the nature of friendship and associations.

There are no strangers, just friends you haven't met

Poet W.B. Yeats and cowboy Will Rogers are both credited with this phrase. In neither case have I found a direct citation. Best to say, “Someone once said . . .” It is a simple teaching: Be open to all people and consider all as potential friends. It builds on other quotations about keeping an open mind and not rushing to hasty conclusions about people or things. These words are not far off the proverb, “Don't judge a book by its cover.” Again, we have a phrase that depends on the comfort and protection that your social class, housing and other factors provide. While all cities are full of strangers who may cause harm, the areas where harm is more likely are highly concentrated. To believe and act upon this phrase asks a lot more of some than it does of others.

> Hebrews 13:2
> *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,*
> *for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.*

The proverb and the Bible verse are similar but not identical. In the former, *all stranger*s are friends. In the Bible verse *some strangers* are angels. While this difference is clear, the purpose seems to be the same: to instil a sense of acceptance and imagination to every meeting, and to overcome reticence with strangers. Which friends can we point to who were friends before we met them? I am pretty sure the answer is “none.”

We are known by the company we keep

This wisdom is offered with an even more troubling tone with the words, “Surround yourself with 'better' people.” I remember my father saying that he always tried to play tennis with players better than himself, so he could learn from the challenge. It made sense until I wondered what would happen if everyone thought that way. Nobody would play anyone! No one would ever condescend to play someone of lesser calibre. In the same way, if we all set out to surround ourselves with “better” people, nobody would spend time with anyone else. The teaching that “you are the sum of the five people you spend the most time with” inherits this problem as well. If one could measure “betterness,” everyone would fall into one of two camps: wanted or unwanted. If people really do follow this advice, then the only reason we have any social interaction is because people are fooling each other into thinking they are "better" than they actually are. Although this is a cynical approach, it may be closer to the truth than any of us want to admit. Aesop's fable, The *Ass and the Purchaser* tells the story of a man buying an ass and putting him in his stable. Because the ass quickly took rest beside the laziest of his animals, the man immediately returned the ass, presuming him to be the same. Confucius wrote in *Analects* that we are to “have no friends not equal to yourself,” implying we should not debase ourselves with “lower” friends; a few lines later he says to “cultivate the friendship of the good.”

> Philippians 2:3
> *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit,*
> *but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.*

Paul solves the problem for us: If we consider all people better than we are, then we cannot help but surround ourselves with better people. Perhaps this was in Jesus’

mind when he “ate and drank with sinners.” A troublesome door opens when we try to articulate why we spend time with the people we do. It is a challenge not to sound either condescending or selfish. On the other hand, to say that we put no thought into those with whom we associate neither rings true nor sounds prudent. I do know that the (poor) company Jesus kept appears as a key factor in his arrest and execution. I also know that it was while spending time with the *unclean* that Jesus invites us to “follow him.”

Good fences make good neighbours

While commonly connected with Robert Frost's poem, *Mending Wall*, the "good fences" idea recurs through almost all cultures and in countless places. I was delighted to find these words among the graffiti on the western side of the Berlin Wall when I visited it in 1981.

> Proverbs 23:10
> *Do not remove an ancient landmark*
> *or encroach on the fields of orphans.*

A powerful person can take advantage of someone with less power. That power can take many forms, from financial wealth to knowledge and education to having influential friends. Here the proverb reminds us not to take advantage of weaker people by disrespecting the space they are entitled to. The boundary or the fence is good; it separates neighbours and should do so. This still leaves open for discussion what makes a fence a good fence. All over the world we have conflicting claims to land based on history, possession and other appeals. To push the metaphor, we have a world where many "fences" are considered illegitimate. I sometimes think the Gitxsan-Wet'suwet'en territories in northern British Columbia should be a tourist destination for all of humanity. These two peoples, with different languages, cultures, economies and histories claim to have lived side by side without violence since "time immemorial." I am not aware of anywhere else on earth where such neighbours can be found. The "fence" in this case is the Skeena River. It probably helps when the "fence" is teeming with tasty salmon.

Birds of a feather flock together

It is true that birds of like kind flock together. It is also true, as a similar expression goes, that water seeks its own level. Both of these sayings are used to explain how we humans choose the company we keep. Cicero said words now translated as: “Be careful of the company you keep.” Plato's *Dialogues*, Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and James Joyce's *Ulysses* all contain similar thoughts. Aesop’s parable of *The Farmer and the Stork* makes this point as a bird attempts to convince a farmer to spare his life because it is a stork and not a crane. The farmer responds saying, “That may be so, but I found you with the robber cranes so I will treat you as one.” This phrase *describes* that “like attracts like.” It does not *advise* like to attract like. The saying with the opposite meaning is the simple phrase “opposites attract.”

> Romans 12:16
> *Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are.*

The scripture is unquestionably prescriptive. We *ought* to associate with all people and we should have a preferential option of those in low position. This calls us to resist the temptation to seek advancement by limiting ourselves to like-minded folks and people who are seen as prestigious and attractive. While it may be true that “birds of a feather flock together,” Paul writes to the church in Rome telling them not to be constrained by that tendency. However, he appears to teach the opposite when he wrote the church in Corinth, “Bad company corrupts good character.” (1 Corinthians 15:33) In fact, we *are* to overcome the tendency to be fearful of others rubbing off on us. Spending time with only our own kind is, simply put, a cop out!

You have enemies, good!

That statement means you've stood up for something at sometime in your life. Although often attributed to Winston Churchill, the same thought can be found in Victor Hugo's 1845 writing, *Villemain*. He states that fame “must have enemies, as light must have gnats. Do not bother yourself about it.”

> James 4:4
> *Adulterers!*
> *Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?*
> *Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*

James' words are in line with those of Jesus in Matthew 5:11: “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you, falsely, on my account.” One could interpret the entire history of the church through these verses and this saying. The church continues to have to live with the tension that popularity and acceptance have benefits but create the climate for compromise. When the church mirrors the values of a society, the compromises bring only short-term benefits. Eventually the church crumbles, having lost its core. While the early church warned against “friendship with the world,” it has forever since been the story of the church to stray into that realm of comfort and friendship with those in power and authority.

Generosity

Generosity is a common thread in the traditional testimonies of Quakers as generosity, among other values, can promote peace, simplicity, integrity, community and equality.

Attendance at meeting and offering vocal ministry, when so led, can also be seen through the lens of generosity. Quakers are encouraged to "enrich the Meeting for Worship . . . [with both] silent and vocal [contributions]."[57] This extends to Quaker business as Friends are asked to consider "all decisions with . . . a generous and loving spirit."[58]

Quaker encouragement to "be active and conscientious citizens" requires a committed involvement that demands generosity of time and talent.[59] In the same way, the commitment to "relieve social and economic oppression and injustice"[60] requires generosity of time and talent. While analysis and movement for broad social change are never far away from Quakers, this is understood as being in concert with "the right sharing of resources" and ensuring "that our neighbours' basic necessities are met."[61]

Quakers also identify time itself as worthy of sharing in a disciplined way. "Do we set aside and make opportunities to share life experiences and learn to communicate with one another?"[62]

Generosity, although valued universally, is expressed in many forms. Sharing, giving, asking, lending and other forms are considered in the aphorisms that follow.

Share and share alike

Aesop's fable of *The Two Travelers and an Axe* provides an ancient promotion of the value of sharing. The story tells how two travelers come across an axe and one begins to claim it is his own personal find, rather than the mutual discovery by them both. As this happens an angry mob confronts them as thieves. The traveler who was arguing for dual ownership, at this point “gives in” and says that the axe belongs to the friend who was claiming the sole possession. The moral of the story is that sharing has value. Sometimes the meaning is made clearer by adding that sharing applies in both bad times and good times. There is also something implied in the phrase “share and share alike” by using the word "share" instead of "give.” It implies equality rather than condescension. French writer Pierre Corneille wrote “the manner of giving is worth more than the gift” in his play, *Le Menteur*, which translates as *The Liar*.

> Isaiah 58:6-10
> *Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice,*
> *to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free,*
> *and to break every yoke?*

These verses and the ones that follow speak of fasting as more than a simple display of seriousness and names fasting an act that could lead to unwelcome spiritual pride. Isaiah suggests that the purpose of fasting is to make food available for the hungry, and to allow the spiritual practice to begin a flow of justice, charity and humanity. It begins and ends with sharing. Share and share alike is not just a simple moral teaching but a world-changing prophecy.

It is better to give than receive

These words come directly from the Bible in Acts 20:35. The King James Version translates “better” as “more blessed.” The phrase “True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar” is found in the text of an address given by Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4, 1967 at Riverside Church in New York. The quote is immediately followed by a call to revolution: “It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.” It is very much like the quote linked to Archbishop Dom Helder Camara which comes in enough variations that it is likely a paraphrase: “When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why they are poor, they call me a communist.” Through less political eyes, this phrase gives meaning to the AA slogan, “You received without cost, now give without charge.” If I were to offer a common concern for most of the people I met in jail, it would be that I frequently heard words of entitlement or a sense of being owed. Most often this was due to an injurious childhood but almost as often it was created by the corrupt, mean-spirited wound inflicting correctional system. The words “It is better to give than receive” do not come naturally to someone who already feels *owed*, in a general sense.

> Luke 10:33
> *But a Samaritan while traveling came near him;*
> *and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.*

Of all the strong words attributed to Pope Francis, his statement that he wants “a poor church for a poor world” is the one that I think deserves the most attention. It is so radical! It speaks about the lived reality of the world. It speaks about the corrupted history of the church. And it declares a desire, an intention and a direction. It calls the church to enflesh its compassion, to be the incarnate Christ, to be the body of Christ. The actions of the Samaritan, the

simple wisdom that it is “better to give than receive” and the Pope's leadership all line up. A world that followed such advice would look radically different than the one we live in.

The world is your oyster

In Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*, Pistol says, “Why, then the world's mine oyster. Which I with sword will open. It is there for the taking.” The phrase, usually addressed to a young person, describes a world where one’s talent is ready and the opportunities multitudinous. The expression does have a slight ring of narcissism, implying the person's relationship to the world is more important than the world. Similar expressions like “It is there for the taking” and “What’s mine is mine” run the same risk. While both, and other similar phrases, can describe genuinely founded enthusiasm, they can also be a “tell” when someone sees the world as revolving around them.

> Genesis 1:26
> *Then God said,*
> *"Let us make humankind in our image,*
> *according to our likeness;*
> *and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea,*
> *and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle,*
> *and over all the wild animals of the earth,*
> *and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."*

The word translated as “dominion” (New Revised Standard Version) or rule (New International Version) has had an immeasurable influence on human history. Our relationship with creation has been one of subduction. *Râdâh* means dominion, control and rule. The word ‘*âśâh* is commonly translated as “let us make” and offers a balance to this role. Rather than this dominion being a command from God to humanity, it is an invitation to join God who we are told repeatedly saw the goodness of creation and created with love. In addition, the role of humanity to “till the ground” (Genesis 2:5-8) is certainly more an image of caretaking, tending to and stewardship of the earth, than of creation

being our storehouse to use as we please. Obviously, the whole relationship of humanity with the rest of creation cannot be equitably described let alone resolved in one page. And, sadly, the humanity's thinking that the world is our oyster to be subdued appears to have not worked very well.

Charity begins at home

The first modern use of this phrase was in 1843 by Charles Dickens in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. “But charity begins at home, and justice begins next door.” The concept itself can be traced back to 200 years BCE. In most cases, the words describe what *is* more than what *ought* to be. A cynical variation can be found in the 2004 play, *Wit Without Money*, by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher. “Charity and beating begins at home” makes the point that just because something is found most readily at home, it is not necessarily a good thing.

> 1 Timothy 5:8
> *And whoever does not provide for relatives,*
> *and especially for family members,*
> *has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

In some translations, such as the King James Version, the word *unbeliever* is translated as *infidel*. It is a harsh verse and tough for people who might be prevented from providing for immediate family due to a disability, illness or another similar reason. There is also the issue of the risk of misrepresentation. Often people say “Charity begins at home” to justify not offering charity to projects that are further away, either physically or psychologically. One can invoke Jesus' question, “Who is your neighbour” to remind oneself that charity and compassion are not to be reserved for a selected few. Even the phrase itself, “Charity begins at home,” implies that it extends *beyond* home, for it speaks only of the beginning. Paul does not say that one should choose charities by virtue of their proximity to home. In contrast, many see anonymous giving as being the most virtuous. In any case, the problem with charity beginning at home is not in its meaning, but in its application and misuse as an excuse to ignore needs that are not readily visible or close in proximity.

Beggars can't be choosers

I use this phrase often. I make it known when I know I am speaking from a weak position. If I am seeking charitable donations for the not-for-profit that I work for, I don't get to choose how much people donate. When I ask my adult children for assistance in anything, I don’t try and pretend they have a debt of any kind that they need to pay back in service. This slogan appears in the imperative, as cited in a 1546 collection of proverbs produced by John Heywood, “Beggars should be no choosers.” This is a small but not insignificant difference. To say it is *impossible* for beggars to be choosers is distinct from saying it is impolite, inappropriate or ill advised. I am sure many beggars have tried to be choosers, and many have likely succeeded. I have certainly been “up-sold” by panhandlers on several occasions. So, it does happen! Beggars can be choosers.

> Mark 10:17
> *And as he was setting out on his journey,*
> *a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him,*
> *“Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”*

Unquestionably, this is a begging scene. The man honours Jesus with the words “Good Teacher” while down on bended knee. The “rich young ruler” is told by Jesus to forfeit his wealth. We don't know exactly what the man expected but we do know that he was “in shock and went away grieving” (Mark 10:22), leaving us to conclude that he expected a different answer. Perhaps he even expected to be told, “You have nothing else to do, you are a perfect servant.” In this case, the beggar did not get to be a chooser, he begged but Jesus was the one who made the choice of answers, and he gave the man only one choice.

Neither a borrower or a lender be

Polonius gives this fatherly advice to Laertes in Act 1 Scene 3 of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The words, “For loan oft loses both itself and friend, And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry” bridge the gap between the above advice and the equally well-known words "to thine own self be true.” In any contemporary setting, there are inherent issues with this phrase. My experience is that highly marginalized poor people have no choice but to borrow and lend. Banks, pawn shops and pay day loaners will do it at incredible rates, so the obvious choice is to go to whoever else you can. It is a privilege of the comfortable to expound such a thought that you can live free of borrowing or lending.

> 2 Corinthians 9:7
> *If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive,*
> *what credit is that to you?*
> *Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again.*

Several texts in the Hebrew Bible point to a prohibition on charging interest. In fact, it is those very texts from Deuteronomy, Exodus and Leviticus that give rise to the entire industry of Islamic or Sharia banking. Jesus moves the legal impediment to the realm of morality and the blocking of blessing when you seek not only to profit, but also to inflict hardship on another. We live in a world that runs on credit and to truly live without borrowing or lending requires extraordinary efforts. However, to be measured and mindful about offering and extending credit and how it impacts others is well within our reach. The implication of 2 Corinthians 9:7 is that, when you are asked for a loan, it is best to either give the money without expectation or simply say no. My own experience has been that whenever I did make a direct personal loan, the larger the amount, the more likely I would not be paid back. A.J Jacobs dealt with

these challenges not only extensively but very creatively in his *Year of Living Biblically*.

No one has ever become poor by giving

Anne Frank, at age 15, wrote a short piece entitled “give.” Here is how it ends:

> Give and give again. Keep hoping, keep trying, keep giving! People who give will never be poor! If you follow this advice, within a few generations, people will never have to feel sorry for poor little beggar children again, because there won't be any! The world has plenty of room, riches, money and beauty. God has created enough for each and every one of us. Let us begin by dividing it more fairly.

> Proverbs 28:7
> *He who gives to the poor will lack nothing,*
> *but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses.*
> *Whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing,*
> *but one who turns a blind eye will get many a curse.*

Had Anne Frank, a young Jewish girl who kept a diary while hiding from the Nazis during World War II, read the Book of Proverbs? Did this verse inspire her writing? I can only imagine the answer to both questions is “Yes.” Do most people live as though these words are true? No.

Gratitude

Quakers recognize that spiritual wholeness requires thankfulness.[63] Seeing that which is of God in all produces constant occasions for appreciation and gratitude. Quakers see celebration as an appropriate response to “life, [which is] a gift of God.”[64]

Quakers are asked to “be thankful each day [for] an opportunity for a new adventure of life with God,”[65] to exercise that thanksgiving regularly and to encourage others to do the same.[66]

While Quakers would not be limited in what they can be thankful for, particular attention is given to cherish “the beauty and wonder of God’s creation.”[67]

“Giving thanks for all blessings” is advised for the spiritual life of Quakers.[68] Quakers see “thankful awareness of God’s presence” as inextricably connected to an ongoing openness to “continuing revelation and the possibility of change and religious transformation.”[69]

Gratitude is close to the heart of all major spiritual traditions and many humanistic approaches to life. Aphorisms that point to the wisdom of gratitude are plentiful. Only a small sample follows.

The best things in life are free

These words are common in lyrics to multiple generations. They are the title to a song written in 1927 for the musical, *The Good News*. The song lists all kinds of beautiful things including the moon, stars, flowers and birds. In 1957, the early rock and roll hit, M*oney* used the same catchphrase but in a sarcastic tone, as it names money as being better than things. In 1992 Janet Jackson and Luther Vandross had a hit with a new song by the name, *The Best Things in Life are Free*, in which these words extol the delights of romantic love. I guess we are overdue for another generation's take on these words!

> Proverbs 23:4
> *Do not wear yourself out to get rich; be wise enough to desist.*

Considering that God's creation was made without cost, the best things in life *are* free. Many verses like the one above could be chosen to underscore the point that wealth is not to be sought as a way to happiness, salvation, freedom or comfort.

Have a gratitude attitude

The rhyme is so obvious that it is almost comical reading how people claim they were the one to coin the phrase. It usually appears in the imperative, as something that *should* be done. This makes us ask: Can (true) gratitude be compelled or forced? A similar phrase is “Gratitude turns what we have into enough.” I remain unconvinced that gratitude is as simple as making a choice to be that way. And, therefore treating gratitude like it is a choice can be harsh and oppressive to those who are unable, for whatever reasons, to make that choice.

> Luke 17:15-16
> *Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back,*
> *praising God with a loud voice.*
> *He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him.*
> *And he was a Samaritan.*

These words fall at the end of a story in which Jesus heals ten lepers; only *one* – a Samaritan – gives thanks. Once again it is the outcast, the unclean one, who shines and does the beautiful thing. The in-group is exposed yet again. The good religious folk do not have the gratitude attitude. Presumably, they are prevented by their pride. The outsider, presumed by all to be *wrong*, has the thankful heart that leads to thankful actions. The story ends with Jesus proclaiming that it is the man's own faith, his dependence on God, that made him well, rather than any extraordinary power that Jesus himself had to heal. The gratitude attitude is neither coerced nor owned as a privilege. Instead, it arises naturally out of an awareness of need and an appropriate orientation of dependence which recognizes the foolish myth of self-sufficiency.

It is an honour just to be nominated

While we know these words from world stage ceremonies like the Oscars, people have offered the same words with great sincerity in much more humble settings such as being named the employee or volunteer of the month in a small organization. Many have said, “Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success.” Others have promised, “If you love what you are doing, you will be successful.” Coach Taylor in the TV Series *Friday Night Lights* put it this way: “Success is a by-product.” Playing the game right is what matters, the honour of wins and awards is off to the side.

> 1 Peter 5:6
> *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God,*
> *so that he may exalt you in due time.*

Is our life of service and humility simply to receive God's praise in due time? Are we only after the crown of glory (1 Peter 5:4)? Or is that “success” a by-product of the righteous life? Do we have to choose between a “pie in the sky” and following Coach Taylor's advice to let rewards take care of themselves? I hope not! If “many are called but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14), is it an honour just to nominated? Is it an honour to be called even if you are chosen? Can I offer a one-word answer to these questions? Can you? Do we have to? Likely not! Questions are usually more humble than answers.

Don’t bite the hand that feeds you

While not recorded in English until the early 1700s, the notion is much older. Aesop’s best-known fable might be *The Goose That Laid the Golden Eggs*. The owner of the goose would have been set for life by receiving a golden egg each day, but instead he cuts the goose open to find the supply of eggs, leaving him with one dead goose and no more eggs.

> 1 Samuel 14:33-34
> *Then it was reported to Saul,*
> *“Look, the troops are sinning*
> *against the Lord by eating with the blood.”*
> *And he said, “You have dealt treacherously;*
> *roll a large stone before me here.”*
> *Saul said, “Disperse yourselves among the troops,*
> *and say to them,*
> *‘Let all bring their oxen or their sheep,*
> *and slaughter them here, and eat;*
> *and do not sin against the Lord by eating with the blood.’”*
> *So all of the troops brought their oxen with them that night,*
> *and slaughtered them there.*

Israel had defeated the Philistines and, in celebration, the soldiers began to take animals from their foes and eat them without proper preparation. This means they were eating them without giving thanks to God, who they believe provided them with the victory. Although many people eat without giving thanks, once saying grace becomes a habit, it just doesn’t feel right to skip it. As one elder said to me, “The food doesn’t taste right.” There is a sense that anytime we fail to be mindful of God's gifts, we “bite the hand that feeds us.” Alice Walker put it this way in her book, *The*

Color Purple: “I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it.”

Count your blessings

While perhaps not the direct source of these commonly used words, there is a tradition that comes from an ancient Jewish directive to "give 100 blessings a day." Presumably, the act of "reciting" blessings is for the benefit of others. Conversely, the phrase is usually understood to promote the practice of offering private words of appreciation for blessings received. The implied purpose is to develop gratitude by practicing it. One of my common probing questions as a chaplain was to ask people if they had ever come close to dying. Often, they would relate several serious incidents in short order. Usually, such stories were followed by a declaration of thankfulness and a phrase like "everything happens for a reason." They often said that they had a specific purpose in life and that God was revealing that purpose through those serious incidents. I found it difficult to hear three or four consecutive stories in a row with the same conclusion and yet with no grasp of what purposes God's blessing might lead to.

> Psalm 103:22
> *Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion.*
> *Bless the Lord, O my soul.*

Psalm 103 reads like a never-ending crescendo of praise. Verse 22 ensures nothing is left out by praising God for everything, everywhere! While such abundant thankfulness is a meritorious and time-tested spiritual practice, it is difficult to offer those words when the gratitude is not being experienced. Questioning someone's downcast spirit is not always helpful. "How come so glum? What have you got to be sad about?" I can only say, in my case, this has *not* been what has lifted me out of clinical depression. In fact, it makes it worse. All I did was agree that I had no ready explanation for my moroseness and that made me feel even

worse. I have heard it said that the most successful salespeople are able to give people ideas and then let those people think the ideas were their own. Perhaps this is the gift needed to lead people to gratitude and praise. Rather than telling someone to be grateful and to count their blessings, perhaps it is enough to show and invite, to “transcend and include,” to use the language of Ken Wilber and others.

Don’t look a gift horse in the mouth

Such words were quoted by St. Jerome in Latin around the year 420 CE. Since you can tell a horse's age by looking at its teeth, it is considered rude for it shows a lack of trust when the age of the horse is assumed to be young enough to have value. The phrase implies that gifts should be received with grace and appreciation, not suspicion and examination.

> 1 Thessalonians 5:21
> *. . . but test everything; hold fast to what is good;*

These words are part of the final advice given by Paul in his first letter to the church in Thessalonica. They are preceded by teachings to be respectful, patient, courteous and more, and are followed by a call to the faithful trust in God's provision. The testing refers specifically to words of prophecy and as such make no comment on the procurement of horses. However, the idea that everything that appears to be good *is* good seems not to be embraced by Paul. Our proverb says to err on the side of good manners, while Paul leans to ensuring that what you receive is of true value.

Pay yourself first

Not only are these words spoken by countless investment advisors, they are also often attributed to “Momma” or “Papa.” It is just another way of saying that one should make it a priority to save money or that it is better to earn interest than to pay it. It is a simple call to prudence and seems to stand up to the test of common sense.

> Deuteronomy 26:2
> *. . . you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground,*
> *which you harvest from the land*
> *that the Lord your God is giving you,*
> *and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place*
> *that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name.*

The Bible contains verses that reject the idea of charging interest in any way but one can also find verses that praise wise investment. This passage, which introduces tithing, makes it very clear that our tithe is from our first fruits. It is not to be cobbled together at the end of the day. Only when it comes first does it truly present itself as a sign of thanksgiving and trust. Contrary to the advice from parents and investment dealers, the Bible says to pay God first, not yourself.

Honesty and Truth

Not only are Quakers encouraged to be “honest and truthful in everything [they] say and do,”[70] they are asked to “seek the truth which other people’s opinions may contain” for them.[71]

Quakers are known for not swearing oaths because of the implication “that one is required to be truthful only under oath.”[72] Truthfulness is expected always and everywhere. As such, Friends are encouraged to “manifest [their] commitment to Truth in all that they do.”[73] Note the slight difference from the line at the beginning of the previous paragraph where the direct link between commitment and action is not made so explicitly.

Honesty is the way in which truth is enacted in “daily work and personal relationships.”[74]Punctuality in paying debts and consistency in fulfilling promises are two areas that Quakers identify as being ripe for compromising one’s Truth.[75]

Quakers see “clearness” as intimately connected with truth and have established practices to encourage clearness of mind and heart.[76] Quakers recognize that truthfulness may bring consequences and advise that, in the case of civil disobedience, if “there are penalties, [one] must suffer without evasion” and that Quakers ought to “support those who suffer for conscience’s sake.”[77]

Quakers see “truth [as a] cause”[78] to be promoted and spread as ambitions and commitments of Quakers to the truth seem to be endless. “May our lives ring with truth to the whole of our being, the whole of our humankind, the whole of the earth.”[79]

Common wisdom to practice honesty is so ubiquitous that it makes its own point that many choose not to follow the advice. Why would we have to make a point so often if everyone agreed to it and followed truthfulness? The variety of teachings that follow allow for explorations of the many ways in which we are tempted to stray from honesty.

O, what a tangled web we weave,
when first we practise to deceive!

I was sure this was Shakespeare before I looked it up. However, these words were written by Sir Walter Scott in his epic poem, *Marmion,* which recounts the history of the Battle of Flodden. The words sum up the story which begins with a forged letter and devolves into a multiplicity of deceptions. It is clearly a warning that one lie will lead to another. Often the word "wicked" is used instead of "tangled" but does not change the meaning significantly.

> Luke 12:2-3
> *Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered,*
> *and nothing secret that will not become known.*
> *Therefore whatever you have said in the dark*
> *will be heard in the light,*
> *and what you have whispered behind closed doors*
> *will be proclaimed from the housetops.*

The quotation refers to the difficulty or challenges of lying; similarly, the Bible verse speaks of the futility of dishonesty. Jesus asserts that one is always discovered in lying, misrepresenting and being hypocritical. The certainty in being discovered is precisely because such false fronts are too difficult to maintain. As someone said to me, referring to the prosecuting attorneys in a court case where they had been summoned as a witness, "I think I had better tell the truth, they are a lot smarter than me and if I try to lie I am pretty sure they will catch me." In spite of the this, when he went to court the judge determined that he was not telling the truth in his testimony.

Face the music

This phrase is said to come from the American Revolution, referring to the practice of a military band playing the “Rogue's March” after a dishonourable discharge from military. It also describes the moment when an actor in a musical has to look into the orchestra pit to see them start to play and knows there’s no going back. An extension is sometimes used: When you buy something “for a song” you may have to “face the music” later on. Regardless of origin, this phrase is commonly used to describe the reality that, at some point, we have to be honest with ourselves and deal directly with unpleasant situations.

> Psalm 50:15
> *. . . and call upon me in the day of trouble;*
> *I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me*

The notion of "facing the music" is inherent in the Psalm 50:15: We ought to face trouble directly when it comes, because we are promised deliverance. To live in faith is to “face the music” and to live fearlessly (Psalm 27:3) with trust in God’s provision.

Flattery will get you nowhere

While the phrase in its common form is relatively recent, several ancient sources also teach people to guard against flattery. One of these is *The Acharnians* by Aristophanes, written in 425 BCE. In fact, the very existence of such warnings appears to counter the proverb. Why would you need warnings against something that is ineffective? Indeed, we are susceptible to flattery, and this slogan is a way to remind ourselves and ready ourselves for its appearance. A friend of mine once said, “Flattery will get you almost anywhere.” It was an honest admission of her susceptibility, but with a firm resolve to have limits within that openness. Flattery might also get us flattery in return. Enobarbus, in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, offers this wit in the middle of verbal jousting: “I will praise any man that will praise me.”

> Proverbs 29:5
> *Whoever flatters a neighbor*
> *is spreading a net for the neighbour's feet.*

The New Revised Standard Version interprets this verse to mean the user of flattery is setting a trap for the feet of the person they are flattering. The New International Version leaves it vague by saying *his* feet; the risk could refer either to the one doing or the one receiving the flattering. Both the Hebrew and Greek texts allow for this ambiguity. In either case the point is the same: Flattery is a threat to the susceptible. As such, one is wise to resolve not to be swayed by flattery. If you understand the biblical proverb to refer to the feet of the flatterer, then the trap is so effective that it can even trap the perpetrator. All this being said, I am never hesitant to use flattery, even though I am never sure what my goal is, other than putting a smile on someone’s face. Or a groan of tolerance, if am not subtle enough.

See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil

With this saying I expect most of us go straight to the visual of the three monkeys with their hands over their eyes, ears and mouth. The idea, which predates the current formation of the words, can be found in sources as ancient as *The Analects* of Confucius written between the 4th and 2nd centuries BCE. “The Master said, ‘If it is not li, don't look at it; if it is not li, don't listen to it; if it is not li, don't say it; if it is not li, don't do it.’” “Li” can be translated in many ways; one translation is “the good.” The saying can have at least two different slants. One counsels to not participate in distracting gossip and behaviour. Another advises to turn a blind eye to anything of suspicion. Readers of a certain age will remember Sergeant Schultz on the TV show *Hogan's Heroes* saying, “I see nothing, I hear nothing” whenever he wanted to free himself from responsibility. It was not uncommon to hear these words quoted by officers in the correctional centre where I worked, when they wanted to avoid the time, trouble and exposure of report writing.

> Philippians 4:8
> *Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable,*
> *whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing,*
> *whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence*
> *and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*

Paul's advice on what to spend time and attention on is the flip side of Confucius' teaching on what *not* to spend our time on. Both offer time-tested advice on good living that is hard to argue with. We are to choose our influences wisely. Obviously, this should come with a caution against becoming exclusivist, isolated and wilfully ignorant in the process.

The truth will make you free

While these words come directly from John's Gospel they are referred to so widely that, their meaning derives not from the source but from the particular context where we might find them. Often the phrase appears in Latin: *veritas liberabit vos*. These words are a common motto of schools, colleges and universities around the world. Although not the motto of Victoria University in Toronto, I walked to class underneath these words everyday as they are spread over the archway of the entrance. I remember this because I misread them at first as “The truth will make you fret.”

> 1 Corinthians 2:16
> *For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?*
> *But we have the mind of Christ.*

I often wonder what it was like to spend time around Paul. At first blush, his writing can read as judgmental, parental, demeaning and self-aggrandizing. However, if that were how people experienced him, he could never have been as effective as history reports. This verse might be the epitome of Paul’s enigmatic ways. Claiming to have the mind of Christ is an incredible act of arrogance if it is something one claims to have achieved. If, however, it is claimed as a gift, then one is simply being grateful. By saying “we” rather than “I” Paul emphasizes that this “mind” or “freedom giving truth” is a freely given gift and not an accomplishment. Clearly he is talking about something that goes well beyond a simple iteration that “I am right and you are wrong.” Any school that uses the words “The truth will set you free” as a motto, presumably does so in humility, acknowledging the many debts we owe as we grow in “wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour” (Luke 2:52). Herbert Sebastian Agar wrote in 1942 that that which makes or sets us free is “for the most part the truth

[we] prefer not to hear.” To have the mind of Christ sets us up to have great responsibility and while that mind may still set us free, it should make us afraid of what we might hear next, for freedom brings responsibility.

Hope, Trust and Optimism

Quakers are asked to be hopeful. They are encouraged to "look for the good and positive in everyday life."[80] This includes facing "the reality of sorrow and hardship but [making] a conscious effort to live with joy."[81] Other Friends describe this tension as "yielding to God's guidance that [one] may find 'the evil weakening… and the good raised up.'" [82]

Quakers would not be encouraged to follow unsupported, blind optimism that sacrifices truth as Quakers are led to "watch against conformity to commonly-accepted standards."[83] When Quakers encourage each other with the words "let no failure discourage you,"[84] they are being asked to trust that their work is not in vain.[85]

"Walking cheerfully over the world" is not so much a dictum as it is the result of an adventurous way of life that proceeds from "answering that of God in every one."[86]

Hope, trust and optimism are related but not identical. The various proverbs and sayings that follow explore those nuances and help to differentiate the three from each other.

Hope for the best; prepare for the worst

I have always assumed this phrase came from the military. It is apt in that setting but is recorded without military reference as far back as 1565, according to the *Facts on File Dictionary of Proverbs*. It is common sense. Be optimistic and realistic at the same time. Find the balance. Be prepared for all outcomes. Definitely, this is a phrase in the category of "easier said than done" as most of us fall into either the overly optimistic category – expecting the best even when there is little reason to – or the overly pessimist approach that expects the worst in all cases.

> 1 Peter 3:15-16
> *. . . but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord.*
> *Always be ready to make your defense to anyone*
> *who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you;*
> *yet do it with gentleness and reverence.*
> *Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned,*
> *those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame.*

When we try to live a life of hope in a world of despair and to live a life of compassion in a world of narcissism, we will find opposition in a hurry. The Biblical advice here is to "always be prepared" for the worst or greatest of challenges. We are also reminded that with our hearts in God's care we know we will be provided for as we have need. This includes when our fears are realized and our preparation was inadequate. The life of faith includes hoping for the best without being too blind to prepare for the worst.

Hope springs eternal

While I cannot imagine he was the first person to use the phrase, Alexander Pope is most commonly connected with it, in his *Essay on Man* of 1733. “Hope springs eternal in the human breast: Man never is, but always to be blest: the soul, uneasy and confined from home, / Rests and expatiates in a life to come.” Pope appears to be offering this as the nature of the human, rather than a prescription for behaviour.

> Isaiah 35:1-2a
> *The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,*
> *the desert shall rejoice and blossom;*
> *like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,*
> *and rejoice with joy and singing.*

These words begin an extended set of images where nature is reframed as a place with no more threats and with abundant sustenance. This passage is not good news for jackals, lions and other predators as their way of life is over! If we acknowledge the human species as predatory, this passage is a warning rather than a comfort. If hope springs eternal, we need to ensure we are not on the opposite side of hope!

Just be yourself

These words are given as advice in many situations. A common use is helping someone who is nervous about something such as speaking in public, interviewing for a job, going on a first date or being interrogated by the police. We do not need a clinical diagnosis to be aware that we each have many “selves” depending on the given needs of a particular situation. We are naïve, however, to think that we can be aware of all of our selves in every circumstance.

> Ephesians 2:10
> *For we are what he has made us,*
> *created in Christ Jesus for good works,*
> *which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.*

The same challenge that comes with the simple advice “be yourself” comes in reading this text as well. In describing the transition from “lost” to “found,” Ephesians 2:9, prior to this verse, makes the point that we are saved by faith and not works. Verse 10 implies that our true self is that which God gives to us, rather than that which we construct ourselves. We may well have intimate knowledge of our own words, thoughts and actions, and still not be able discern that within us which is from God and that which is ego or false self. This leads to the paradox that anyone who claims to have transcended their own ego almost certainly has not done so.

It’s all good

“It's all to the good" is an accounting term indicating that the statements are satisfactory and heading in a more positive direction. The shorter version is used in endless circumstances with equally endless connotations. Generally, it means whatever discomfort or conflict was in the past, is no longer impactful or even relevant. It can also be used in a passive aggressive way, as if to say, “It is all good right now because I say so, but I reserve the right to change that whenever I want to.” Used this way, it is a hostile reminder of who holds the real power. Yet another use is shown in an incredible documentary movie made in 2004 called *I, Curmudgeon* which has all sorts of interviews with people who have embraced grumpiness, sloth and depression. My favourite part is a rant about the phrase “It’s all good” that vehemently argues that it is *not* all good and that any use of the phrase is simple delusion. I was aware of this in the prison system. When I would ask someone how they were and got an upbeat positive response, I used to joke “Now we really have a problem… you shouldn’t be okay here,” or I would remind them that it is *not* all good.

> Deuteronomy 4:32
> *For ask now about former ages, long before your own,*
> *ever since the day that God created human beings on the earth;*
> *ask from one end of heaven to the other:*
> *has anything so great as this ever happened*
> *or has its like ever been heard of?*

These words of the Deuteronomist are part of an argument about God's greatness and the follies of idol worship. These words begin a series of reflections on God’s wonderful and fantastic nature. God's goodness is beyond measure. If we can see everything as being under God's creation and care,

we can also say “it's all good” and mean it. The problem is when we utter such words because we feel we ought to rather than having genuine experience give rise to them. Whether we know or trust their truth through faith, to utter them as if we claim their truth when we do not have that experience makes us into liars. While we can “fake it 'till we make it” and utter these words until they ring true to us again, we can also choose to be honest and lament our experience not matching the promise.

All's well that ends well

Although in use before Shakespeare’s time, this phrase came into more common understanding when he used it as a title of a play in the early 1600s. In the play, a love story where Helena falls in love with Bertram and, in spite of her much lower standing in society, wins his love, all’s well that indeed ends well.

> Revelation 21:6
> *Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega,*
> *the beginning and the end.*
> *To the thirsty I will give water as a gift*
> *from the spring of the water of life.*

The words “already but not yet” are shorthand for the term “inaugurated eschatology.” Such a theology says that the Kingdom of God is “at hand” and is known in the present but is not yet fully realized – it also has a future component. From such a perspective, we can read a phrase such as “It is done” and accept it at a literal level but also believe that the full revelation of God's mystery awaits us. We can say that the immediate presence of the Kingdom tells us that all is well and all will end well. The promise of Revelation 21:6 and others like it are offered as certain even if not yet fully observed.

There's a first time for everything

This phrase is often used to justify trying to do something that you may not be quite ready and prepared to do. It is easily followed by, “Here goes.” This can often be an understatement. In the movie, *The Spy Who Loved Me*, James Bond is asked if he knows how to remove the warhead from a nuclear missile. He responds: "There is a first time for everything."

> John 1:45
> *Philip found Nathanael and said to him,*
> *"We have found him about whom Moses in the law*
> *and also the prophets wrote,*
> *Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth"*

While many Christians often believe there was just a little hop of time between the prophecies of a Messiah and the Coming of Christ, this is not the case. While the verse in John reads as if “there is a first time for everything” and the Messiah has just been found, in fact, *many* had thought they had found the Messiah before Jesus. The numbers who were mistaken for Messiahs are part of the context of John’s Gospel and the first hearers of this story knew that the idea that “we have our Messiah” has a competitive context. When we lose sight of that, we fail to understand some of the opposition Jesus encountered. All of this to say that we sometimes perceive something as a first-time experience when it is anything but.

Trust everybody, but cut the cards

Identified as a Russian proverb, this aphorism implies that trust has its limits. Or, at least, trust should not be tempted. One of the most common things I ever heard as a chaplain was: “I didn’t come to jail to make friends.” There are also a lot of cards played in jail to pass the time. I think those who have experienced incarceration likely have a great intuitive sense of the meaning of this phrase.

> Micah 7:5-6
> *Put no trust in a friend, have no confidence in a loved one;*
> *guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your embrace;*
> *for the son treats the father with contempt,*
> *the daughter rises up against her mother,*
> *the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;*
> *your enemies are members of your own household.*

Scripture, at various junctures, points to the untrustworthiness of humankind. (See Isaiah 2:22 and Psalm 146:3 for other examples.) However, these cases are not giving universal instruction, but rather offering lament for the way things are. Micah 7 as a whole speaks of the redemption of Israel, and how part of the brokenness of the people is the inability to trust each other. Verses like those from Isaiah 2 and Psalm 146 speak of the trustworthiness of God, and use humanity as a benchmark. The teaching is not to put your ultimate trust in others, but only in God. With whom, one would infer, you don't need to hedge your bets by “cutting the cards.” Such thoughts present challenges to theists and atheists seeking common ground.

Always look on the bright side of life

A fun variant of this is “Always look on the bright side, or polish the dark one.” While surely not the first use, John Wesley used the phrase in an 1826 sermon. However, it is more popularly known from the last scene of the Monty Python movie, *Life of Brian*. Brian sings these words, hanging on a cross waiting to die, at the end of the movie. It is Brian singing, not Jesus. I interpret that the song criticizes blind allegiance to positive thinking, and wilful ignorance of harsh realities. Moreover, anyone who has suffered depression will be quick to tell you how vacuous such slogans can be in the face of true burden. The idea that a positive response to any situation is a simple matter of will lacks credibility for a good reason.

> Thessalonians 5:16-18
> *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing,*
> *give thanks in all circumstances;*
> *for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

Reducing these words to “always look on the bright side of life” would do them a grave disservice. A few verses later, we see an additional admonition to “test everything,” so this isn't some sort of blissful ignorance that Paul promotes. Quite the opposite! Paul must be talking about a direction, for how does one, literally, pray without ceasing? How does one rejoice without pause? This is our destination as beloved children of God; it is God's will for us. Such a vision and promise is so much more than a “to do” task we will always fail at.

Every cloud has a silver lining

The 1634 John Milton poem *Comus* wonders if the supreme Good "would send a glistering guardian, if need were to keep my life and honour unassailed." The implication is not only that there is good in all things, but it is also so by "intelligent design." Dickens refers to Milton's cloud in his 1852 work, *Bleak House*, when he writes about how this principle can be externalized in the way we treat others. He suggests that when we come across someone we experience as haughty or indulgent we should turn our "silver lining outward" and greet such a person as if we were a child.

> Zechariah 9:12
> *Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;*
> *today I declare that I will restore to you double.*

It is often agreed that hope and optimism serve people well, but it is not universally agreed upon where true sources of these gifts can come from. Is the silver lining in each cloud simply an assertion? Has someone said, "That is the way it is and I know better than you?" Is it a well-placed assumption based on the observations of many people on many clouds? Is it a pseudo-scientific conclusion? Or is it a choice, a way of looking at things, not unlike "wearing rose-coloured glasses" in order to see the positive and hopeful to counteract any negative or pessimistic bias we might have? The answer "yes" could likely be given to all of the questions above. And the same analysis applies to verses like the one immediately above. Is this true because it is offered as God's word? Is that truth supported by experience? Is it a choice of faith to continue to think this way, in spite of times where experience does not support it? Again, the answer is "Yes." Also at play are the elements of timing and tone. Do we correct someone in the last stages of an unexpected and excruciating illness and insist they find the silver lining? If not then, then when do we draw the

line as when it is an acceptable and helpful response? And most importantly, who do we trust to draw the line?

Humility

Some Quaker advice is uncompromisingly straightforward: “Think it possible that you may be mistaken”[87] and “Admit the possibility of being in error”[88]are two examples.

Quakers are also asked, “Do you work to get rid of all feelings of superiority for whatever reason?”[89] There seem to be no limits at work here: Words like “all” and “whatever” remove the possibility of adding mitigating qualifications to this advice.

Often humility is implicit in specific advice and queries. For example, “Do you have love and respect for one another?”[90] and “Do we foster reverence for life?”[91]

One could even count the silent waiting in worship as an act of humility in itself. In the same way, the testimony to equality and the rejoinder to “remember that ministry – in silence, speech, and other forms – is the responsibility of everyone”[92] asks one to attend to their humility.

The essential approach of Quakers to “answer to that of God which is in every one”[93] cannot help but promote humility. Quakers understand that they meet God in a minute by minute manner.

The aphorisms and common phrases which follow speak of humility as a common value and provide ideas on how to make humility your home.

Think it possible that you may be mistaken.

This sentiment is often expressed with slightly more confrontational language such as the rhetorical question, “Are you a freaking idiot?” Oliver Cromwell is known for having written to the Church of Scotland in 1560 trying to avoid war with the Scots saying, “I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken.” Cromwell's name is given to the Cromwell Rule in statistics which asks that statistical analysis make room for the “highly improbable.” It is unlikely, but possible, that British Quakers are directly quoting Cromwell in their *Advices and Queries*. Advice and Query number 17 provides for reflection on respect in general and concludes with the sentence, “Think it possible that you may be mistaken.”

> Galatians 2:11
> *But when Cephas came to Antioch,*
> *I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned;*

In this letter to the Galatians, Paul criticizes Peter for giving into the pressure from Jewish leaders who asked all who wish to follow Christ to become Jewish first. He concludes his argument in Galatians 2:21 with an appeal to grace: “I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!” Here we have apparent disagreement between two of the great “pillars” (Galatians 2:9) of the church. If one of them can be wrong, surely the rest of us can be as well.

Remember where you came from

What do Queen Latifah, Oprah Winfrey, Katy Perry and Donald Rumsfeld and have in common? They are all, along with others, linked with this phrase. It is usually applied to someone who has risen above their station in life and it is a caution not to forget that others are still at that station. But there are so many ways to run with that idea. Could you not just as easily say “good for me for all my hard work that got me here from there” as to say “if not for a break here and an opportunity there and I could still be where I was.” I remember a shocking moment where the CEO of a large organization where I was a summer student said to me in a candid moment, “I am a poor-ass-nigger from the third world; I say that so I won't forget.” To remember maybe is enough; what you do with that memory is another matter. In the case of this executive it was clear to me that she was very determined that no amount of career success or wealth would get in the way of forgetting her roots. Prison ministry always includes a significant amount of volunteer recruitment and oversight. When volunteers came from “an experiential background” it is important to note just exactly how they “remember where they came from.” The words “I was once where you are” can be received as either delightfully compassionate or horrifically judgmental. They can be used to unite and they can be used to divide. It is not enough to know where you came from. What is required is a realistic, thorough, balanced and humble analysis of why you are not where you were.

> Deuteronomy 16:12
> *Remember that you were a slave in Egypt,*
> *and diligently observe these statutes.*

The verses that follow Deuteronomy 16:12 both outline ritualistic practices and provide directions for just living. This includes everything from the building of booths to the

sharing of wealth. The hardships of the past are to give us energy, sustenance and motivation when times are better. They are to lead to thankful humility and moral depth. As we read such a verse, we can remember Paul's teaching “that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as descendants” (Romans 9:8).

Chickens don't praise their own soup

It is a stretch to call this a commonly used proverb. Its meaning is also a little hard to pin down. Chickens do not make soup. They are used for making soup. What's more, chickens don't talk. All this makes for two obvious and logical reasons why chickens do not praise their own soup. They are not capable of praising in the first place but even if they were by the time they have made soup they have been slaughtered and boiled beyond recognition. Regardless of these problems with the phrase, it is true. I have never seen or heard a chicken praising his or her own soup! It is used in the same way other phrases are used to promote humility. "One does not make themselves taller by standing on another's shoulders," "A great person is always willing to be little," and "Eating my words has made for a wholesome diet" are but a few of the phrases meant to dissuade people from praising themselves. Germans make this point with two words "*Eigenlob stinkt*" which means that self-praise emits a foul smell.

> James 3:1
> *Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers,*
> *because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.*

James appears to be speaking practically. There are expectations on teachers and one should be aware of them before taking on that role. My own path to ordination gave me much fodder for reflection. One thought is that I should not presume to be a preacher, because I will be judged more strictly. At the same time, I observed that many active clergy seemed to be ignoring this advice. We live in a culture where in certain situations, for example a job interview, it is entirely expected that we "toot our own horns." I will never forget when I was part of the interview

team for a pre-ordination interview with a Korean student whose culture eschews self promotion. He was so good at listing his shortcomings, we finally interrupted and asked him to identify a strength. He answered immediately, “I am highly aware of my weaknesses.” The cultural divide was so great that it was almost impossible for us to evaluate his responses. The Bible is consistently against bragging and supportive of humility. Perhaps we need to learn from the Korean culture more than they need to learn from us.

If God is your co-pilot, switch seats

I read thousands of catchphrases while writing this book. This is the only one that made me laugh out loud. While short enough to be a bumper sticker, it is also the title of a book on grace and miracles by noted author and speaker B.J. Gallagher.

> Philippians 2:6-7
> *. . . who, though he was in the form of God,*
> *did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,*
> *but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,*
> *being born in human likeness.*
> *And being found in human form,*
> *He humbled himself*
> *and became obedient to the point of death—*
> *even death on a cross.*

The humour in the quote comes from the notion that a co-pilot is the underling of a pilot, not an equal. As such, the oft used phrase “God is my co-pilot” is a little demeaning to the relationship between God and servant or follower. The biblical verse makes it clear that even Jesus considered equality with God problematic, so perhaps we should stay away from any co-pilot language! All this seems to challenge the way some talk of the Trinity. My mother in-law once told me she quit attending church because the parish priest gave her an inadequate answer when she asked him about the Trinity. The mystery of the Trinity makes my head hurt and verses like this one don't help. However, the verse does succeed in reminding me that, since we are not to grasp at equality with God, tidy apprehensions and explanations of God are best left off the table. A similar idea is put forward with this simple dictum: Do not try to put God in a box.

It never hurts to ask

Other similar phrases include “Questions are free,” “There is no such thing as a stupid question,” and “There is no harm in asking.” Many would counter this wisdom by stating that the timing of a question is as important as the question itself. Asking a favour depends on the context and the opportunity of the moment. Often only one chance to ask the question occurs and one must make the most of the opportunity. Asking in the wrong way at the wrong time can close a door. Common advice to those in sales or fundraising is that you must ask for the commitment because it won't come without being asked for. A longer and perhaps more complete way to say the same thing is offered by Daniel Desbiens: “Whoever knows how to ask, knows the path of happiness and wealth.” Charles Dickens’ *Oliver Twist* tells of the story of young Oliver wanting more food and asking, “Please, sir, I want some more,” which leads not only to derision and flogging but his sale, essentially as a slave, to the brutal chimney sweep, Mr. Gamfield. Ask Oliver and he will tell you that it *can* hurt to ask.

> John 2:3
> *When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him,*
> *"They have no wine."*

Several stories in the Bible begin with a request. Two from John's Gospel are the miracle of the water becoming wine (John 2:1-11) and the miraculous raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44). In both stories, it is a woman who gets the story in motion and leads Jesus to perform a miracle. The first begins his ministry and the last previews his own and our resurrection. These stories do not unfold without a woman opening her heart and mind to asking, to making her needs known.

Pride goeth before a fall

Aesop tells the story of two fighting cocks: After winning a battle over the other, one flew to the top of the house and began to crow in glee. This attracted an eagle which flew down, scooped the fighting cock and flew him back to his nest. This allowed the other fighting cock to take his place on top of the henhouse. Pride went before the fall. The very line that we read above is a slight abbreviation of Proverbs 16:18: “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”

> Luke 1:51-52
> *He has shown strength with his arm;*
> *he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.*
> *He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,*
> *and lifted up the lowly;*
> *he has filled the hungry with good things,*
> *and sent the rich away empty*

Pride is one of the seven deadly sins constantly identified within the scriptures. While verse 51 speaks explicitly of pride preceding a fall, verses 52 and 53 speak of success in the political and financial realms. It is as if pride is just assumed (as a natural by-product of success). It is as if the teaching is more about the transient nature of earthly rewards more than about the sin of pride. Or, perhaps, we are being told that pride is so insidious that we cannot ever assume we can enjoy success without its presence. In all cases, we are to be careful, mindful and corrective of our pride.

Quit playing God

These three words read as shorthand for the third of the Twelve Steps of AA: “Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.” It speaks of yielding control through submission to divine guidance, direction and inspiration. It is a call to humility at the essence of the faith journey; this is why the phrase has a vibrant life outside of the AA movement. While this phrase is most often used to refer to how someone is managing their own affairs, it also refers to how they might manage others. As a correctional chaplain, I was always aware of the ways the people I met had been judged. Almost everyone had a list of stories of rejection from parents, resentment from teachers, disinterest from social workers and friends, and other such painful judgments. This is why I was so happy to be freed to the role of *non-judgmental presence* where I was simply there to meet rather than correct, coerce or admonish. The urban multi-storey centre where I worked was unique in that it housed both men and women. The kitchen, next to the first-floor elevator was staffed with men. One time I was standing beside a woman who decided to do an improvised pole dance routine, kitchen staff while waiting for the elevator. An officer looked at me and said, “Aren’t you supposed to teach her not to do that?” “No,” I replied.

> 1 Corinthians 2:3-5
> *And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.*
> *My speech and my proclamation*
> *were not with plausible words of wisdom,*
> *but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power,*
> *so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom*
> *but on the power of God.*

Early in my career, filled with pride in my preaching, I would suggest that any lack of ability was by design so I could follow in Paul's tradition of lacking wisdom. In spite of my many reasons to be humble, humility has never come naturally. Paul's description of effective preaching is a great reminder of how to approach sermonizing. As long as we “play God” we put ourselves above others which prevents us from meeting people with the vulnerability, compassion and sensitivity needed to touch their pain with love.

Integrity

Integrity is more than honesty. Integrity is about the whole. Integrity refers to how well integrated a person or a group is. Therefore, constant evaluation and reflection is required to maintain integrity. You can have honesty without integrity, but you cannot have integrity without honesty. For instance, one could be truthful about being abusive but such a relationship would not have integrity. Integrity implies a strength of moral character and consistent self-awareness. It is almost always expressed in positive terms whereas honesty is often understood as the simple absence of deceit.

In some ways, the Quaker witness to integrity holds all the other witnesses together. If one claims to witness to simplicity for instance, that witness has no integrity unless there is evidence of it being lived out. Since integrity implies wholeness and consistency, Quakers are asked to "bring the whole of [their] daily life under the ordering of the Holy Spirit" as if to say that no area escapes the test of integrity.[94] Quakers' lives are to be integrated rather than dispersed, fractured, segregated or duplicitous.

When faced with shortcomings with their integrity, Quakers are to "find the assurance of God's love and the strength to go on with renewed courage."[95] Another prominent Quaker focus on integrity is in the world of business and financial matters.[96]Although various wording is used, all Yearly Meetings provide queries and advice around gambling and intoxicants. Often these sentiments are offered both in dissuasive and persuasive terms such as "Be on guard . . . lest the love of pleasure take too strong a hold on you" and "Choose such recreations as are pure and healthful."[97]

Integrity can also refer to appropriate vulnerability, such as when Quakers ask, “Do we trust each other enough to make our needs known to someone in our meeting?”[98]Quakers acknowledge that attention to integrity may make them “seem peculiar” to others. Quakers are also advised not to be daunted by being at odds with broader society, and instead are advised to “let your life speak”[99] as a matter of personal integrity. The relationship between who we are and how we present ourselves is explored with the various quotations which follow.

How is that working for you?

No matter who asked this question first, it was Dr. Phil [McGraw] who made it part of our language. The question hits the mark with as few words as possible. Dr. Phil explains how he grew up in poverty and therefore results mattered. If you were trying to earn money for food, you had to succeed. He translates this into the breadth of entire lives and likens this question to looking in a mirror. If you think you are right, and believe that you are on the right path, you still have to be honest as to whether or not your choices are producing results.

> Psalm 50:17
> *For you hate discipline,*
> *and you cast my words behind you.*

More often than not, in my work in prison, I don't have to ask others, “How is that working for you?” After someone talks about what they’re doing and promoting how well things are going, a little silence makes room for the truth to come out. Often, it is not working. Often, their words do not come close to telling the whole story. Jail is a place where it is hard to bluff that you are a success. My constant work is not to personalize it when people do not heed my advice or follow any direction they have sought from me. I recognize that “old habits die hard” and when people make mistakes after seeking my counsel, it is never about me. In Psalm 50, we listen to God speaking loudly, clearly and directly. A list of things the people are doing wrong follows verse 17. God is holding up a mirror. God is asking us, “How is that working for you?” and giving us time to look and consider an honest answer in response. And in all cases, it is the truthful answer that will set us free.

Practise what you preach

While these words are straight from the Bible, depending on the translation, earlier sentiments are easy to find. A Hindu story attributed to Ramakrishna talks about the need to “first practise, then preach” in regards to parenting. A common contemporary parallel is “walk the talk.” The first of Michael Ruiz’s *Four Basic Agreements* is also similar: “Be impeccable with your Word.” Ruiz describes this agreement as being “simple [yet] powerful” and points to Hitler as the great example of the power words can have. He then goes on to talk about the importance of intention. When he reaches his fourth agreement, “Always do your best," he completes his argument for the need to align words and actions.

> Matthew 23:3-4
> *. . . therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it;*
> *but do not do as they do, for they do not practise what they teach.*
> *They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear,*
> *and lay them on the shoulders of others;*
> *but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them*

Jesus is speaking to the “crowds and his disciples” about the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees. His criticisms were so strong and pointed that the Pharisees have become synonymous with hypocrisy. The idea of matching one's words with actions is not only solidly biblical; it stands in the middle of just about any moral structure you can name. One could define *integrity* as having one's thoughts, words and actions integrated with each other and Gandhi is quoted as defining happiness as the harmony of thoughts, words and actions. This coalescence makes sense as integrity and happiness should surely find each other.

Actions speak louder than words

While close to the adage “practise what you preach” it is not identical. Abe Lincoln, Mark Twain and many others get credit for saying that actions speak louder than words. As the idea has been around since pre-biblical Greek society, it is no wonder many people have said it, or something akin to it. The opposite seems ludicrous: Our words are more important and honest than our actions and choices. “Deeds are fruits but words are leaves” expresses the same idea with more imaginative language. In churches and other benevolent organizations, there is usually more discussion about budgets than there is about mission statements. This is because the budget is actually the more honest mission statement. It is where the “rubber meets the road.”

> 1 Corinthians 4:16
> *I appeal to you, then, be imitators of me.*

This quote is mirrored almost word for word in other places (James 2:15-17, 1 John 3:18) and enacted with clarity in yet others (John 13:1-17). There is some irony that we know the most effective speaker in Christian history through his written words rather than his spoken words. His words (Paul’s very business) are still less effective than his actions. I once heard that congregants judge preachers this way: 50% on who they are, 35% how they say things, and 15% on the content of their sermons. At first, I thought this was very cynical. However, it is the opposite. If preachers don’t live lives consistent with their words and speak their words with conviction of their truth and value, why should we bother to listen? Those providing counsel are judged the same way; the strength of the therapeutic relationship predicts the success of counselling better than any other factor. The relationship is more important than education, experience or time spent in therapy. For those working with the marginalized – those who have been let down and led

astray by so many – it is even *more* important to be *worthy of imitation* at all times so that a relationship can grow. The same holds true for friendship. This presents a tall order for sure, but an unavoidable one.

Cross your heart and hope to die

These words were the playground equivalent of a lie detector. Nobody would dare lie after saying these words. Pinkie promises and swearing on “my mother's grave” or one’s “first-born child's life” are similar phrases. Each brings one's claim to truthfulness into sharper focus.

> James 5:12
> *Above all, my beloved, do not swear,*
> *either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your*
> *"Yes" be yes and your "No" be no,*
> *so that you may not fall under condemnation.*

Having sat in many courtrooms for bails and hearings, I have seen many people swear with their hand on the Bible to tell the truth. Many of them strongly identify as Christians. Others, most notably Anabaptists and Quakers, point to this verse and its parallel, Matthew 5:34, as reason not to. The basic challenge is that if we were to be truthful in everything we do, why would we need to have any “special” truthfulness? For some, to “swear on the Bible” is to make a claim of allegiance to the Kingdom of God rather than any earthly rulers. Taking oaths is frequent in the Bible. Examples include 2 Corinthians 1:23 and Galatians 1:20. In Hebrews 6:17 we read that even God swears oaths. There is good reason why not all Christians agreed on how to respond to the invitation to swear on the Bible. The evidence for whether or not we should swear oaths is not clear.

Put your best foot forward

There is a grammatical problem with this phrase: If we have two feet, we would put our better foot forward. As it stands, the implication is that we have three or more feet, if we are going to have a “best” foot. If the origin is with Shakespeare, at least he got it right. King John, in the play of the same name, sends Philip the Bastard on a recruitment mission by saying, “Nay, but make haste; the better foot before.” In that context, he appears to simply say, “Make haste,” where now this saying is usually used to indicate a *marketing strategy* where you work from your strengths, not your weaknesses.

> Psalm 51:3
> *For I know my transgressions,*
> *and my sin is ever before me.*

There are endless calls to humility and honesty and finding "strength in weakness" in the Bible. I chose Psalm 51, and highlight verse 3 because it identifies that our weaknesses are before us, suggesting that putting our "best foot forward" is not only inadvisable but impossible as our weaknesses are already there. Recently, a friend of mine was fired from a job because it was discovered he did not declare his criminal record in his interview. He pleaded to me, “but they never asked,” before adding that he was “just putting my best foot forward.” His position was at a Christian thrift shop and the employer had been hesitant to be explicit with her questions at the time of hiring. Presumably, she was fearful of appearing judgmental. It is not a case of an individual's moral failing but a simple and comparatively innocent example of where our culture of “best footedness” can lead us. Both the employer and the employee had a silent conspiracy to hide the truth. It didn’t work out. A free declaration of shortcomings on both parts would have resulted in a resolution with greater integrity.

Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does

These words are usually attributed to William James. They are often used to motivate people to be engaged in volunteerism or to care more about their work. James' quote is close to the "butterfly effect," an idea in chaos theory referring to how something very small, such as the flapping wing of a seagull, can have a large impact on something much bigger, such as an entire weather system. I have a friend who is a prison chaplain who is also on life parole. At any moment he could have his parole revoked and be put back in. He has been free and doing this for twenty years and it is unlikely he will be sent back to jail, but it is possible. One day he said I had a great advantage over him. He told me, "When somebody is having a really bad day, you're just foolish enough to help them." Having been there, he is convinced that nothing he could do could make a difference for them when they are that desperately aware that a life sentence actually means life.

> Matthew 5:13-15
> *You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness,*
> *how can it be made salty again?*
> *It is no longer good for anything,*
> *except to be thrown out and trampled by men.*
> *You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.*
> *Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.*
> *Instead they put it on its stand,*
> *and it gives light to everyone in the house.*

I doubt that Jesus was pondering the implications of chaos theory (which assumes everything can influence everything) when he spoke of salt and light. However, the idea that we can all make a difference certainly resonates with the

scripture verse. What we do with our life each day may not always be visible to us or others, just as we are not always aware of salt and light. Yet, both the quote and the images of salt and light remind us to trust that our actions do make a difference. Therefore, it makes sense to act “as if” we do make a difference.

Old habits die hard

Three different songs with titled “Old habits die hard” are sung by Mick Jagger, Eric Burdon and Dusty Springfield. Three distinct songs with the same title! Jagger may be singing about an ex-partner, or he may be singing about the temptation of drugs. Springfield also sings of an old relationship and again, whether it is a person or personification, is left up to the listener. And the Eric Burdon song speaks of the old habit being anarchy itself. My experience as both a parent and a pastor is that old habits *do* have vigorous staying power and that any habit, good or bad, can get “old” in a hurry.

> Romans 6:11-12
> *So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin*
> *and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*
> *Therefore, do not let sin exercise*
> *dominion in your mortal bodies,*
> *to make you obey their passions.*

The path from acknowledging that personal change is hard to using that reality to justify continuing bad behaviour is a slippery slope. A slogan for some who are trying to overcome addiction is “relapse is part of recovery.” And while that is a great help to stop someone from giving up because of one slip, it can also be an easy way out of taking responsibility. Almost as if to say the recovery isn’t real without having failures to point to. It is precisely this difficult place that Paul is examining in Romans 6. While acknowledging our frailty and the fact that the “spirit is willing but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41), Paul also declares the victory over sin and temptation. God's will, we are told, is that our joy may be complete (John 16:24). God wants our destructive old habits to become nothing more than a vague memory. Some people have this experience and some don’t.

All the world's a stage

These are exact words from Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* but the same sentiment is echoed at other places in his works. In fact, many have made similar observations. The field of social psychology, which grew in the first half of the twentieth century, popularized the concept of “role theory.” This theory said that our actions are best understood in the role we are playing. One can be a parent, a politician and a pugilist but can function quite differently in each of the roles.

> Matthew 6:1
> *Beware of practicing your piety before others*
> *in order to be seen by them;*
> *for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.*

We do act according to roles, and our roles change. And we are right to adapt as needed. Yet, there are limits. When our adaptations are completely inconsistent, or appear to serve only our own best interests, problems often follow. Scott Peck's book, *People of the Lie,* engages this idea fully. Peck states that the “central defect of 'the evil' is not the sin but the refusal to acknowledge it.” To play a role and not know it is a role is a major problem. To play a role and pass it off as more than that is a problem. Peck's “Psychology of Evil” (chapter two) delineates the way in which a person becomes divided within, and with no core, lives out roles without integrity. His entire book could be understood as a *tour de force* sermon on Matthew 6:1 and like verses. The first words of the book are ominous: “This is a dangerous book.” A serious treatment of evil should be taken seriously, as simple treatments of evil invariably reduce to us-them dichotomies which insult our intelligence and frequently make things worse than they were.

Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me

It is possible this nursery rhyme originated in the African-American community, in response to slavery and prejudice. It is the kind of advice given to Jackie Robinson when he became the first African American to play major league baseball. While the hurt that a stick or stone causes, when compared to a verbal jab, is certainly different, the opposite notion is expressed by the proverb, “The tongue is not steel but it cuts.” In prison, name calling has a huge impact. Once a person has been labelled as a *rat* (informant) or a *skinner* (sex offender) they are no longer safe from inmate to inmate violence and need to live in protective custody (isolation), whether or not the accusations are true.

> James 3:8
> *but no one can tame the tongue—*
> *a restless evil, full of deadly poison*

There are many contexts where words hurt. You can fend them off but, like a gun, knife or fist, they hurt if you do not have the proper defences. In my years of listening to stories of trauma, I have often heard how entire periods of people's lives are defined by a few harsh words that not only injured them then, but continue to cause them pain. A man told me that as his wife threw him out the door, she said, “Even God doesn't like you.” Another man told me that when he told his father that his girlfriend was pregnant, his father declared that he was too young to be a grandfather, walked into the next room and killed himself with a hand gun. I have lost track of the number of times I have heard people remember their mother saying, “I wish I never had you.” Words hurt and the Epistle of James makes that very clear. Our personal integrity is a defence against slander and defamation, but this does not mean that such actions are without impact.

Don’t wash your laundry in public

Whether it be laundry, linen or clothes, the phrase has the same meaning: Keep your problems to yourself. It is the opposite of the straightforward advice to not keep secrets. To live out the advice could well involve intentional deceptions, if not barefaced lies. Of course, successive generations have found great entertainment in people washing their laundry on national television. Gerry Springer and copycat shows have had great success knowing that many are quite prepared to share the most intimate parts of their life in return for their “fifteen minutes of fame.”

> 2 Corinthians 12:10
> *Therefore I am content with weaknesses,*
> *insults, hardships, persecutions,*
> *and calamities for the sake of Christ;*
> *for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.*

One could be both delighted and private about their problems, or “blessed” in their hardship (Matthew 5:3) and private about those blessings. However, these verses and others like them (2 Corinthians 11:30) encourage us to not find shame in our life's struggles. Rather, we are to “boast of our weakness.” As such, we should not be afraid of what others see. To push the metaphor, if our laundry needs doing, we should do it, for “The Lord [and the Lord only] is our judge” (Isaiah 33:22a). Such readiness to show weakness can be truly shocking in a world where such candid assessment is foreign.

Everyone has their price

This phrase came up often in the remand centre where I worked. It was used in black humour when officers would talk about how they would never bring in drugs, weapons or communication devices for the inmates. They would add this phrase as a quiet afterthought, perhaps being healthy in recognizing its truth. In my career, only once was I asked if I would bring in contraband. And the ask was amusingly indirect. The inmate said to me, “I told the guys on the range that Glenn was honest and would never bring anything in, even for $5,000.” I was tempted to pretend to be surprised and then respond, “Well thank you, I am just glad you didn’t tell them I wouldn’t do it for $10,000.” I was having a good day, I knew better and kept my mouth shut after thanking him for sticking up for me. Even though, to this day, I doubt highly that he was doing that. What he was really trying to do was to determine my price.

> Mark 8:34
> *He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them,*
> *"If any want to become my followers,*
> *let them deny themselves and take up their cross*
> *and follow me.*

While the need to count the cost of discipleship is made clear in all the Gospels, it is a particularly present theme in Mark. Christ is on his way to an unjust and painful death; thus, the words “follow me” are poignant. The costs of discipleship are immeasurable. As are the rewards! The price of discipleship is everything. The price of everything else is somewhere below that.

Judgment

As Quakers make room for various interpretations and understandings of "eternal matters," judgment, in the cosmic sense of the word, can be understood in a multitude of ways. However, various Quaker advices and queries point, albeit somewhat indirectly, in some consistent directions. The Indiana Yearly Meeting, for instance, concludes their *Questions for Spiritual Growth* by asking friends to remember that "only God is our true judge."[100]

Quakers are to "acknowledge their need for forgiveness and grace"[101] and "be led to true repentance."[102] Presumably there is an implied culpability that has already been judged in order for repentance to be desired.

Quakers are advised to refrain from judging others by laying "aside [their] own wishes and prejudices while seeking with others to find God's will for them."[103] Quakers are encouraged to "understand imperfection as a part of being human."[104]

The entire tradition of Quaker Queries and Advices implies correction, if not judgment. The queries can be piercing and the advice demanding. However, compassion is always at hand. For instance, Friends are guided to "listen non-judgmentally" to those "trapped in addictive behaviours [and] other compulsive patterns."[105]

Quakers are more concerned about "unity with the help of God," "growth in grace and service for God," and "spiritual satisfaction" than about any form of doctrinal exactitude with regard to judgment.[106]

The aphorisms, proverbs and sayings in the following pages address both the experience of being judged and the experience of being a judge.

There are two sides to every question

Protagoras (490-420 BC) is credited with this thought which many have repeated and perhaps others said before him. The reality is that the number of variations in stories does not stop at two. While this can be seen in just about every moment of human life, the “sides” in understanding the assassination of John F. Kennedy is an example where the number two is not only surpassed but obliterated. Perhaps my most favourite story is of a group of blind people encountering an elephant. Jain, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu and other versions of this story exist. Each person experiences only one part of the elephant as they touch it. Although versions vary, the tail is often likened to a rope, the body to a wall, the leg to a tree and the ears to leaves. By talking with each other they come to realize the limited perspective of any one vantage point.

> 1 Corinthians 6:7-8
> *In fact, to have lawsuits at all with one another*
> *is already a defeat for you.*
> *Why not rather be wronged?*
> *Why not rather be defrauded?*
> *But you yourselves wrong and defraud—*
> *and believers at that.*

Humans will dispute. That is our human creaturely nature. Many Christians, most notably in the Anabaptist tradition, avoid court at all costs. Most understand Mennonites as having given birth to restorative justice. This approach brings perpetrators and victims together for reconciliation, rather than seeing crime as an abstract offence against the state. This leads to mediated solutions that recognize that there are at least two sides to every question, and usually more. In contrast, courtrooms impose a choice between two sides that undermines the complexity of real life issues.

Before you judge someone, walk a mile in their shoes

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee uses a slightly more colourful metaphor suggesting we are to “climb into [another's] skin and walk around in it.” Often moccasins appear instead of shoes. One presumes that the use of the word “moccasins” implies Indigenous beginnings. The use of the notion that trying to live someone else's experience is of great value is all the more pertinent in cross-cultural settings. I have lost track of the number of pairs of moccasins I have received as a gift, inviting me to join others in their journey. Being an “eater of shared bread,” a companion, is one of my definitions of the Christian life. Martin Luther King described this same convergence of compassion and charity when he remarked. “true compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar.” Presumably he was saying true compassion requires relationship.

> Romans 12:15
> *Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.*

Paul's teaching to the Romans is a “how to.” It tells us how to get along with others. It is also a “how to” on withholding judgment of others. It doesn’t suggest we should test people to see if they should be rejoicing or should be mourning. It is much harder to judge others with whom we spend our time and with whom we have a relationship. And how better to integrate with others than to imagine ourselves in their skin, to share their footwear and join them in laughter and weeping. A practical suggestion I received years ago was to introduce myself to my neighbours as soon as possible. This way, if there ever is a conflict, we could deal with it as people with a connection and not abstractly as a value or an idea. The same advice stands for parents and teachers as

well as other people who might otherwise only meet once a problem emerges.

Don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater

A well-cited use of this phrase is in Thomas Carlyle's 1853 essay, *Occasional Discourse on The Nigger Question*. It reads, “The Germans say, ‘You must empty out the bathing-tub, but not the baby along with it. ’Fling out your dirty water with all zeal, and set it careering down the kennels; but try if you can help the little child.” He uses this image to argue against the abolishment of slavery, saying that slavery should not be abolished just because there are problems with it. While we would disagree that the phrase applies in this context, the idea that entirely new solutions are not required for all problems is a universal principle. This is why this phrase is commonly invoked.

> Matthew 13:29-30
> *But he replied, "No; for in gathering the weeds*
> *you would uproot the wheat along with them.*
> *Let both of them grow together until the harvest;*
> *and at harvest time I will tell the reapers,*
> *Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned,*
> *but gather the wheat into my barn."*

Jesus' story appears to be one that guards against hasty conclusions. Rather than telling us to weed the wheat fields, as one would expect, he suggests caution for we may not be able to tell wheat from weed. Therefore, we should wait the harvest until we know with greater certainty. This is a parable, not an analogy. What this means, is that we should read it for its one broad stroke rather than breaking it into its parts and assigning corresponding identities to each one of the roles within the story. The point of the parable is clear: One should delay judgment. This is the point of “don't throw the baby out with the bathwater.” One should avoid nasty, massive and irreversible decisions. It is wise to seek out and wait for more information whenever possible.

Quaker decision-making is marked by this value to such an extent that it almost always proves frustrating to those new to Quaker process. However, this patient approach is usually embraced with experience.

Fortune favours the brave

While often wrongly attributed to American showman P.T. Barnum and others in recent times, this line has many possible ancient sources. It appears in the play *Phormio* (a Greek naval commander) written by Publius Terentius Afer, commonly known as Terence, but there is no particular reason to believe that this is its first appearance. Suffice to say, this idea has been around for a long time. The sense of the phrase is not that far from the idea behind, “God helps those who help themselves.”

> Luke 6:36
> *Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

To favour the brave is to be just, as it provides a reward for what is honourable. However, God is full of mercy and grace, and to be merciful and grace-giving is to bestow and take without reference to merit. The second half of Luke 6:35 informs us that God “is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.” Fortune, it seems, is not to be limited to the brave or any other group for that matter.

Don’t compare: Identify

This phrase is used at the beginning of some AA meetings to remind people that you can connect with another person's story without having to compare. Questions like “Were they worse or was I?” or “How come they couldn't figure that out sooner?” are, put plainly, useless. The work in the meeting is to allow the other person's story to inspire you to continue to make healthy choices that enable you to live out and tell your *own* story. There is no need to compare. John Lydgate wrote in the 1400s, “Odyous of olde been comparisonis, / And of comparisonis engendered is haterede” which, understood in contemporary English, means that comparisons are odious or repulsive, and they breed hatred.

> Romans 14:4
> *Who are you to judge someone else's servant?*
> *To his own master he stands or falls.*
> *And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*

The passage this verse comes from could be subtitled “Just chill.” Humanity, at least in North American culture, seems to be addicted to comparing. I have witnessed a transformation in my own life that I never expected. After a number of years in prison chaplaincy, I realized that, compared to most of the people I get to meet, I stand up pretty well. I do good deeds, I am generous with my time and money, and I have never been convicted of a crime. From there it dawned on me how pointless it was to spend any energy at all on the comparison game. This also spared me from the other half of the equation where I realized how unchallenging my life has been compared to the adversity that so many others have faced. As I came to understand the comparison game as a “no contest” situation, it soon became pointless in all contexts. The work it takes *not* to

judge is much greater if you are already comparing. If you let comparison go simply as “not being your job” then it is much easier to avoid making judgmental choices and, instead, to identify what you hear and see.

Don’t be so hard on yourself

British hip-hop artist, Jess Glynne encourages her fans with a 2015 song with these words as the title. Essentially, she is saying that life is hard enough on its own, and one need not make it worse with self-criticism. Shorter phrases that say the same thing include “Lighten up,” “Give yourself a break” and “Take care of yourself.” And while this advice is nearly universally applicable, I expect we all know folks who might benefit from a little more self-criticism than they appear to exercise. For instance, I have been given more full-length mirrors as gifts than the average guy. I take it that some think I could be a little harder on myself when I get dressed in the morning.

> Jeremiah 29:11
> *For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord,*
> *plans for your welfare and not for harm,*
> *to give you a future with hope.*

I heard this verse preached on in support of the idea that God calls us to prophecy, the three forms of prophecy being comfort, edification and exhortation. The preacher, Mark Hughes, went on to explain that comfort is biblical and important and that we need edification because so many of us are working with poor information. Exhortation, or compelling another to action, is needed for any of this to make a difference. He also talked about how living this way, without fear, will produce incredible moments where all things line up. When we witness someone being “mean to themselves,” we can respond appropriately. We do this by embodying these words from Jeremiah in order to offer comfort, knowledge and encouragement.

There but for the grace of God go I

This phrase is often attributed to Pastor John Bradford who is reported to have called it out at an execution, as a challenge to all others watching in judgment. Ironically, Bradford himself was eventually hung to death. The phrase's popularity within the Twelve Step movement extends well into popular culture. While used slightly differently in varying circumstances, it usually suggests that it is only a pretension to consider ourselves different from those who do terrible things or find themselves in dire circumstances for whatever reasons. I heard these words frequently in the jail setting. Often someone was acknowledging a friend or acquaintance who had died while following the same lifestyle as their own. I always struck by how, as they spoke about somebody else, I could be saying it about my relation to them. It is like a long chain with each person saying it about the person that they can see *below* them.

> 1 Corinthians 15:10
> *But by the grace of God I am what I am,*
> *and his grace toward me has not been in vain.*
> *On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them*
> *—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.*

Chapter 15 of 1st Corinthians provides an early yet tight creedal statement of the Christian faith. In proclaiming the resurrection, Paul speaks of his own experience. In verse 10, he explains that grace has no boundaries or favourites, and that anything he says or does is a product of God's grace. Not only do these verses agree with the common phrase attributed to Pastor Bradford, they extend the claim. Paul is saying that every moment of life and every situation imaginable exists within the grace of God. Writer Anne Lamott offers a non-mechanistic understanding of grace in

her book, *Travelling Mercies*. “I do not understand the mystery of grace – only that it meets us where we are and does not leave us where it found us.” Grace does not need to be completely understood or explained in order to be enjoyed.

Damned if you do, damned if you don't

In 1814, American Preacher Lorenzo Dow argued that any doctrine of predestination is inherently contradictory with the words: “You can and you can't, / You will and you won't; / You'll be damn'd if you do, / You'll be damn'd if you don't.” Now, this phrase is usually used with very little if any theological context. It describes a difficult choice of acting or not acting and the perceived gains of each choice are not as great as the perceived dangers and risks. Common use would say that if you haven't studied for an exam and you are offered to take an oral exam instead of a written one, you would likely fail regardless of which option you choose. Damned if you do, or damned if you don't. There’s no winning.

> Romans 7:18-19
> *For I know that nothing good dwells within me,*
> *that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it.*
> *For I do not do the good I want,*
> *but the evil I do not want is what I do.*

These verses imply that, on our own, we are damned if we do and damned if we don't. One immediately thinks of Step I of AA, as these words describe our powerlessness in the face of temptation. Taken literally, this powerlessness can become a built-in excuse for any wrongdoing. Our fallen nature is responsible for our broken ways of living. It is almost like excusing yourself by saying “the devil made me do it.” Conversely, others interpret verses such as these as an invitation to a battle, a battle between good and evil waged within your very own body. Paul reflects, what is thought of as core orthodoxy. Namely the notion that we can overcome evil, not by our own effort or wisdom, but by grace alone.

Give him enough rope and he'll hang himself

The first known English use of this phrase is reported to be in 1639 within *The Historie of the Holy Warre* by English preacher and historian Thomas Fuller. He writes about the fate of Roman Catholics who continued their allegiance to the Pope, sealing their fate by their foolishness. People often deliver this phrase with a disrespectful "I know better" attitude where one predicts that the folly of another will eventually lead to their downfall. As worded, it does not leave room for the confessional statement where one could say, "Give me enough rope and I will hang myself."

> James 1:14-15
> *But one is tempted by one's own desire,*
> *being lured and enticed by it;*
> *then, when that desire has conceived,*
> *it gives birth to sin, and that sin,*
> *when it is fully grown, gives birth to death.*

James writes these words as if to say that this is the nature of humanity. "Each one" includes us all. The phrase is not about the abstract "him" whom we deride but about the very way we all are – about human nature, if you will. If we accept the orthodox doctrine of The Fall, it follows that our broken nature will lead us to yield to temptation, and eventually this will separate us from God, which is a living death. Without correction, eternal separation follows. James as sees humanity as fallen and able to take on "rope" that will lead to our own demise. Only the grace of God can overcome this inevitability. By moving from the other to including all, this phrase goes from smug self satisfaction to a central declaration of Christian orthodoxy. Many Quakers, although we are not tied to doctrine, would still claim this experience, that we are quite able to bring out our own demise. In fact, the Quaker testimony to Earth Care is often enunciated from that very perspective.

There is nothing good nor bad but thinking makes it so

These words, in slightly different form, are found in *Hamlet*, Act 2, Scene ii. Hamlet is complaining and calls the whole world a prison, and names Denmark as the worst place within the prison. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern disagree but Hamlet clings to his own opinion based on his own experience and his own choice. While often used to encourage people to choose a positive outlook, the phrase itself leads one to conclude that a negative view of all things is a choice we are equally free to make as well.

> Galatians 3:28
> *There is no longer Jew or Greek,*
> *there is no longer slave or free,*
> *there is no longer male and female;*
> *for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.*

Paul expresses that he has been set free. He no longer has to distinguish himself from others. He no longer has to think of *the other* as bad in order to feel good about himself. He is saying: There are no good or bad people. People are only bad when we think they are. And since we are all “one in Christ” there are no bad people. Paul refuses to conclude that bad people even exist.

Don’t judge a book by its cover

The phrase is identified with a character's comment in the 1860 George Eliot Novel, *The Mill on the Floss*.

> “Why, it’s one of’ the books I bought at Partridge’s sale. They was all bound alike,—it’s a good binding, you see,—and I thought they'd be all good books. There’s Jeremy Taylor’s ‘Holy Living and Dying ’among ‘em… and there’s a lot more of ‘em,—sermons mostly, I think,—but they've all got the same covers, and I thought they were all o’ one sample, as you may say. But it seems one mustn't judge by th’ outside. This is a puzzlin’ world.”

It is not just the general teaching to not judge by first impressions, but more specific directive to not be led astray by sameness. One must look more deeply to discern the unique qualities of a person, place or thing.

> John 12:15
> *"Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion;*
> *see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt."*

This verse predicts the Palm Sunday event when Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. Warriors entered cities on majestic and mighty horses to announce their pending triumph by showing their might. Jesus comes on a symbol of peace. The Jewish people wanted a liberator, to be freed of Roman rule, and believed a Messiah would come and set them free. They both feared and hoped for the battle that was to come. To bring the analogy back to the cover of a book, the entry into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey was to announce that Jesus’ revolution was to be one of an entirely different sort. Jesus proclaims his victory in John

17:33: “I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!” Yet his promise is not recognized, because people judged the book by the cover: They expected a cover with a great and mighty warrior on a stallion and therefore ignored the book with the King who rode a donkey and wore a crown of thorns.

People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones

Chaucer (c1385) wrote about the need for people with glass heads to avoid thrown stones in his poem, *Troilus and Criseyde*. This is a common warning, urging us to be careful not to criticize others when we have our own vulnerabilities that could be exploited.

> John 8:7
> *When they kept on questioning him,*
> *he straightened up and said to them,*
> *"Let anyone among you who is without sin*
> *be the first to throw a stone at her."*

These words are well known, although the quotation is often shortened to the question, “Who will cast the first stone?” This is yet another case of Jesus siding with the outsider. A “woman caught in adultery” was brought to Jesus by the “teachers of the law and Pharisees” so she could be put to death by stoning for her sin (John 8:3). Jesus’ answer accuses the “holy,” while vindicating and saving the life of the “unholy.” This story corresponds almost perfectly with the warning to people who live in glass houses. And we all have weaknesses or character blemishes that could be likened to a glass head or a glass house.

When you point your finger at someone else
you have three pointing back at you

I first heard these words from an inmate who caught themselves in mid-sentence as they were speaking poorly of another person in custody. Although of unclear origins, this phrase shows up in some interesting places, including the song, *Is There Anybody Out There* recorded by Canadian singer Nelly Furtado and fellow Canadian, rapper K'naan. It describes a fact: The way we point at others demands that our non-pointing fingers face ourselves. It is a clever reminder of the dangers in criticizing others. I used this phrase a lot as a prison chaplain, when I sensed others to be deflecting their own need for change by pointing out the faults in others. I also found myself thinking negatively about the officers I worked with, and wanted to give many of them the advice to quit their job. One day I heard my own advice and noticed my three fingers pointing at me while I said, “You should quit.” I followed my advice and did so.

> Luke 6:42
> *How can you say to your brother,*
> *'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,'*
> *when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye?*
> *You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye,*
> *and then you will see clearly to*
> *remove the speck from your brother's eye.*

This verse is almost identical to the phrase above but clarifies the need to be careful with our accusations. By contrast, passages such as Deuteronomy 13: 6-9 tells us, “If anyone secretly entices you saying, ‘Let us go worship other gods,’ whom neither you nor your ancestors have known . . . you shall surely kill them.” The mitigating words come in Deuteronomy 13:14 where we are told to “conduct a thorough investigation” which could be understood as

beginning with self examination, namely, removing the plank from our own eye. but they certainly fall well short of the compassionate teaching of Jesus found in this story as rendered by Luke and Matthew. We are to invited sit with these contradictions. Rather than simply choose Luke over Deuteronomy or vice versa, we are called to contemplate whenever we are faced with perceiving failings in our brother or sister.

Who lives by the sword, dies by the sword

These familiar words are straight out of the Bible. Matthew 26:52 in the King James Version reads: “Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.”

> John 18:10-11
> *Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it,*
> *struck the high priest's slave,*
> *and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus.*
> *Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath.*
> *Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?"*

The story of Simon Peter striking Malchus with his sword is told in all four Gospels. It is found in Matthew 26:51-52, Mark 14:47, Luke 22:50-51, and John 18:10–11. This is where Jesus is being arrested and the apostles, in spite of all the preparation Jesus offered, still did not understand his destiny. While each evangelist shows his own slant, they all agree that responding to violence with violence is not the will of Jesus. Conversely, I have heard people who are caught up in a violent lifestyle using this to justify responding to violence with violence. Essentially, they are saying that “dying by the sword” is a cost of doing business. It makes no sense to interpret this scene in that way. A useful context for this story can be found in Deuteronomy 32:35, Romans 12:19 and Hebrews 10:30, all of which report that God declared, “Vengeance is mine.”

Hate the sin but love the sinner

This is at the heart of words written by St. Augustine in 423 CE. He was writing a letter to a monastery where his sister was a nun. His purpose was to educate the nuns on how to instruct, correct and direct. As the words imply, the call was to compassion and love. The challenge for us all is that acting from love is easier said than done. A friend once told me that, in the private school he attended as a child, a teacher who decided a child should be physically punished with a strap was never the teacher who would deliver the punishment. Instead, the child was sent out to another teacher with a note. In this way the punishment was delivered with "indifference," as the teacher who did the striking had no sense of what the offence had been and no immediate personal attachment to the event. It appears this was an attempt to separate the child from the behaviour, or the sinner from the sin.

> Matthew 2:16
> *When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi,*
> *he was furious, and he gave orders to kill*
> *all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity*
> *who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time*
> *he had learned from the Magi.*

This is one of the more troubling stories in scripture, and I have come across some whopper sermons that try to explain it. One preacher went to great lengths to point out that there may have been only twenty or so male children of that age in a place the size of Bethlehem so "it wasn't as bad as it sounds." The only way I can cope with this story is to see it as pointing to the love of God which sets us free, having the downside that people do awful things with that freedom. In this case, Herod went to extreme lengths to ensure that

the newborn king would never be a threat. From a literary viewpoint, this foreshadows all the opposition that Jesus would face, and helps us better understand The Passion when we get to it. Do we read this story and respond by hating Herod? If so, we deny that Herod is our brother. If so, we deny what we have in common with Herod. If so, we deny every time we have protected our own interests. To use the Bible as a mirror is to look for what we have in common with all the characters, not just the ones we like.

Justice and Law

While Quakers have been led, throughout their history, to law-breaking acts of civil disobedience, they continue to urge each other to "respect the laws of the state."[107] However, the "first loyalty" for Quakers is to be "God's purposes."[108] "Friends have supported the state as long as its requirements have not opposed the leadings of the Inner Light."[109]

Seeking justice is not always synonymous with the law. In fact, it can be directly opposed. Quakers are asked, "Do you oppose the use of land, labour, technology and capital for human exploitation or in ways destructive to other living things?"[110] Further advice includes the admonition to "work to amend laws that you consider unjust."[111]

"Throughout their history, Friends have cherished the testimony that justice in international affairs, as with every other sphere of human life, can be achieved only by peaceful methods."[112]

Quakers' emphasis on the ongoing guidance of the Light leads to a collective spirituality that focuses more on relationship than with law. Quakers are led to act in various ways at various times rather than to rely on "laws" that

dictate morality in all situations. In a similar vein, the language of testimonies, queries and advices rather than doctrine leads Quakers into constant self-examination rather than adherence to fixed laws regarding God's will.

The value of equality, which lies at the heart of several of the quotations which follow, is seen by Quakers as an integral part of justice. Fairness follows from equality. Quakers are to avoid "making statements that are unfair or untrue."[113]

Quakers equate social justice with "fair dealing" and "fair treatment of all."[114] Rather than the common default in popular culture of abiding by laws, Quaker advice is more likely to encourage a positive Spirit-guided life. "Follow steadfastly after all that is pure and lovely and in good report."[115]

A fair day’s work for a fair day's pay

These words are often presented by the labour movement as self-evidently true. In nine one-syllable words the word “fair” is used twice. How can one argue with a principle that seems so obvious? The question only becomes difficult when one tries to define or measure fairness. Is it moral fairness? Legal fairness? Social fairness? And most important, who decides what is fair? All of a sudden the simple phrase becomes complicated. It does not mean the same thing to all people in all circumstances.

> Matthew 20:16
> *So the last will be first, and the first will be last.*

These words serve as the “punch line” of the outrageous story of the workers in the vineyard told in Matthew 20:1-16. The landowner hires workers throughout the day for an agreed upon wage. At the end of the day, the same sum is paid to the workers who worked only the last hour of the day as to the ones who worked in the heat of the sun the entire day. Those who worked the hardest and longest are outraged. *We* are outraged – this story flies in the face of our sense of fairness. In our world, those who work more get paid more. But this is the very nature of grace. Grace gives freely and lives in an economy outside of “a fair day's wage for a fair day's pay.” I offer the best description of grace I have ever heard: “Justice is getting what you deserve. Mercy or grace is not getting what you deserve.” The phrase “virtue is its own reward” comes to mind, if labour itself is seen as a virtue. In this case, the payment is secondary to the primary reward: being able to work. Such a thought is heresy in consumer culture where all activity is geared towards amassing the resources to consume, while labour itself is consistently ignored and undervalued.

The doors swing both ways

When a baseball player swings both ways it means they hit both left and right handed. When a person is said to swing both ways, it often means they are bisexual. When a door swings both ways, it means it can open either in or out. However, the phrase does not usually describe a door but rather a circumstance where one set of rules applies to all people. For example, a prison guard might tell an inmate to show some respect and the inmate could answer by saying "That door [respect] swings both ways." Respect needs to flow in both directions, not just one.

> Proverbs 22:2
> *The rich and the poor have this in common:*
> *the Lord is the maker of them all.*

What is the heart our relationship with God? God is our maker. This is true whether we are rich or poor. It is also true whether we are tall or short, fat or thin, bright or dull or whatever way one wants to use to try and divide us. We have in common our identity as creatures. This commonness should lead to the conclusion that doors swing the same way for all of us. Privilege is pretention!

Yes, and

Any introductory class in improvisational theatre will include these two words. The teaching is to always say "Yes" and then go along with what other actors say while moving the story forward. It is a tool used, not to avoid conflict, but to allow a scene to develop. This also is the title of a book of daily meditations by Franciscan friar Richard Rohr. His own words might provide the best synopsis of what it means to bring a "Yes, and" approach to life. "There is someone dancing with you, and you no longer need to prove to anyone that you are right, nor are you afraid of making mistakes." Another word for living this way is "faith." Living by faith means yielding control and trusting in God's provision, so much so that you no longer conceive what that provision will look like. Being so radically opens allows you to live in the world of "and." In this world, nothing need be defended. God embraces us as we are and we are set free to do the same.

> Matthew 5:17
> *Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets;*
> *I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.*

"Yes, and" stands as an alternative to the infamous "Yabut" (Yeah, but) which none of us like to hear but we all too frequently use. The word "Yabut" is almost a sure sign that somebody has not been listening but only waiting for their chance to speak. So much of the Bible transcends simplistic thinking where we separate right from wrong, truth from lies, good from bad, deserving from undeserving and so on. Our cultural lens, which loves to impose such simplicity, prevents us from seeing the "Yes, and" language of scripture. Here, Jesus could say, "The Law is old and useless, hear the good news." Or he could say, "The Law is eternal and new thoughts are pointless if not sinful."

Instead, he says “Yes, and.” He explains that he came to fulfill; he says “Yes” to the Law and “Yes” to his fulfillment. And in doing so invites us into so much more than making a simple good versus bad judgment.

What goes around comes around

These words have two immediate meanings that connect but can say very different things. We can see this as a universal moral principle in which there is a mechanistic connection to how we act and how others act towards us. It can also be used, more broadly, to describe how everything is connected and affects everything else. Or, as in physics, “To every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.” A Russian equivalent of this phrase translates, “As is the call, so is the echo.” When I was 21, I bought a bicycle that was built locally. I got a great price on it and later learned the seller made the bike with stolen parts. Several years later, in a city over 2000 miles away, someone stole this same bike from me. When I tell this story, I do not imply that any mechanism other than life's randomness often evens things out over time. Indigenous Elders that I have befriended often use the phrase, “The Grandfathers will take care of this” and they use these words to counsel against any form of retribution. They trust justice will prevail, that those who have gone before us will ensure this to be true.

> Deuteronomy 32:35
> *Vengeance is mine, and recompense,*
> *for the time when their foot shall slip;*
> *because the day of their calamity is at hand,*
> *their doom comes swiftly.*

If vengeance is God's work, there are certainly many volunteers out there to help God. I can't see any interpretation of this verse other than a promise that encourages us to trust that God will deal with people when they harm us. What is more, this promise frees us from having to even imagine vengeance, let alone act on our imagination. Do vengeful people of faith not realize what they are doing? Or, do they imagine themselves collaborating with God in the same way that a person who

plants a tree partners with God in ongoing creation? Paul clarifies the choice for us, or at least makes his own opinion clear. After he quotes this verse from Deuteronomy, he adds, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Romans 12:21). The teaching of the Elders and Grandfathers is a perfect mirror for Paul.

Follow the spirit not the letter of the law

All laws and agreements are written with both intention and interpretation in mind. Interpretation and intention are interrelated and inseparable. This relationship lies at the heart of story, culture and relationships. A classic that covers this topic is *The Spirit of the Laws* written by Montesquieu in 1748. The intention of his work is to identify and describe the "good man . . . the man who loves the laws of his country and who acts from love of the laws of his country."

> Romans 2:28-29
> *For a person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly,*
> *nor is true circumcision something external and physical.*
> *Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly,*
> *and real circumcision is a matter of the heart*
> *—it is spiritual and not literal.*
> *Such a person receives praise not from others but from God.*

Jesus speaks about the dynamic between the spirit and the letter of the law so much that the word Pharisee has entered our language to mean a person who follows the letter at the expense of the spirit. Paul has the same idea when he writes in Romans about the Jewish identity being internal (spirit) rather than external (law). The Book of Deuteronomy (13:4) speaks of "cleaving" to God. Such a close relationship reminds us not to confuse law with God. The purpose of law is to help us relate to God, not to replace our relationship with God, and community is what keeps us strong (providing both support and accountability) in this common pursuit.

The law is an ass

This is a line from Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1838) but is also found in a play by the name *Revenge for Honour* which was written almost two hundred years earlier. Authorship has been credited to both Henry Glapthorne and George Chapman. I also recall these words as the first line of my high school law text. Interestingly, Dickens actually wrote "The law is a ass – a idiot" and the context makes it clear that, while the law can fail us, it is not a statement about the general value of law but of how it may operate in certain circumstances. The earlier phrasing, in *Revenge for Honour* is actually "The law is such an Ass" and it, too, speaks of unique failings rather than the concept of law as a whole. A better rendering would be "The law can be an ass."

> Matthew 5:18
> *For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away,*
> *not one letter, not one stroke of a letter,*
> *will pass from the law until all is accomplished.*

The quote above, in the two contexts cited, speaks of civil or common law failing to serve the greater good in all situations. When Jesus speaks of "the law," he is talking about the Spirit which desires for our good. He speaks of law that is "finer than gold" and "sweeter than honey" (Psalm 19:10). It may well be the case that any problems with law are less about the nature of law and more about the commonness of human misinterpretations, justifications, twists and manipulations that render the law to act *like* an Ass.

That is the way the ball bounces

Generally, these words are considered to be synonymous with “That's the way cookie crumbles,” “That's life,” and other similar phrases. But there are subtle differences. In a game, a ball can bounce *for* you, *or against* you but with a cookie, one presumes you do not want it to crumble unless you are making a pie crust with it. Accepting the good and the bad is the meaning of the saying about the ball bouncing; accepting the bad appears to be the meaning of the saying about the cookie crumbling. The phrase about the ball could be taken to say that while life is unpredictable, at least we can predict that unpredictability.

> Matthew 5:45
> *. . . for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good,*
> *and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.*

These words follow the teaching to love your enemies. In that context, Jesus seems to be saying, “You really aren't all that different from your enemies.” We share the same sun and the same rain and much, much more. Jesus repudiates the idea that we can fine-tune our understanding of each person's circumstances, actions and fate in order to neatly define and separate friends and enemies.

Mystery and Understanding

The Quaker practice of silence points to the reality of God being beyond our comprehension or ability to describe. “Treasure your experience of God, however it comes to you. Christianity is not a notion but a way.”[116]

Quakers are encouraged to be “aware of the spirit of God at work in the ordinary activities and experiences of . . . daily life.”[117] Furthermore, Friends are reminded that “spiritual learning continues through life, and often in unexpected ways” and asked, “Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come?”[118]

“It is in silence that [Quakers] still [their] hearts and minds so the Spirit of God may enter.”[119] Silence is better described as “the rhythm of waiting and listening . . . that [enables the] sense of the Inward Light.” Quakers are encouraged to use the silence to “meet in expectant waiting.”[120] Quakers are also to be open to subtle revelation. “Do we practise the art of listening to one another, even beyond words?”[121] Quakers are encouraged to be more interested in opening up for ways to “feel the power of God’s love” rather than setting limits and barriers.

Quakers do not place science in opposition to religion. “Religion and science are approaches to the universe and our relationship to it. There need be no conflict between these approaches.”[122]

When speaking of mystery and understanding there are several variables at play. One can lean more to simplicity or more to complexity. One can choose the arts or the sciences as their primary mode of interpretation. One needs to balance the forces of humility and confidence in

understanding feelings and experiences. These and other creative tensions are explored with the brief quotations that follow.

God is everywhere

A lot of people say these words as if they are undeniably true. As if to say, if God is not everywhere then there is no God. I remember trying to tell a joke to a guy I had just met on a train once and he stopped me mid-sentence. It was a “heaven and hell” joke and he did not want to hear it because, in his words, “God is always watching us.” Later on in our conversation he explained to me he was moving east because “My damn wife got pregnant.” While I didn't know all the details, it appeared he was involved in her becoming pregnant and I wondered if the same God who didn't want him listening to jokes had any opinion on his choice to jump on a train leaving his pregnant wife behind. Certainly, picturing God as being everywhere fits with the idea that God is omniscient, seeing and hearing all things. It is also an image or understanding of God that does not readily lend itself to thinking of God in intimate terms. While our imagination can likely fathom a God in all places who is both far and distant in the same moment, it asks us to overcome a very abstract image.

> John 1:1-2
> *In the beginning was the Word,*
> *and the Word was with God,*
> *and the Word was God.*
> *He was in the beginning with God.*

Matthew introduces Jesus with a genealogy that traces back to David. It is important for Matthew that Jesus, the Messiah, is understood as a child of Israel. Luke offers a genealogy that that goes all the way back to Adam. It is important for Luke that Jesus both was human and would save humanity. Mark offers no genealogy. And John's prologue, unlike those of Matthew and Luke, offers a cosmic genealogy where Jesus is described as ever present. John 1:1-8 has Christ present from “the beginning” and to say

Christ is present at all times is not all that far from saying he is present in all places particularly if you understand space and time in unity. If we say the simple words “God is with us,” can we solve this dilemma?

Keep it simple, stupid

Known as the KISS principle, it reflects rather common advice to avoid unnecessary complication. The mnemonic KISS device is said to have been developed and used by the US Navy in 1960. Gentler forms such as “Keep it short and simple” have also been used. Others have suggested substituting the word “sweetheart” for “stupid.”

> 1 Timothy 3:16
> *Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great:*
> *He was revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit,*
> *seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles,*
> *believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory.*

The purpose of the historical creeds is to try to express faith in the simplest, most agreeable words possible without sacrificing content. This is one of the earliest creeds recorded. It both acknowledges mystery, but also, in very few words, manages to cover the birth, life, death and ascension of Jesus. The Christian Faith, simply stated, the “KISS” version.

Expect the unexpected

Various people are credited with applying this concept in settings as diverse as sports, politics and business. An ancient source is Heraclitus and while the entire quote varies depending on how the Greek is translated, the essence is that failure to expect the unexpected will cause you to miss or fail to recognize the unexpected, even when it is presented directly to you.

> Acts 1:6-7
> *So when they had come together, they asked him,*
> *"Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?"*
> *He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods*
> *that the Father has set by his own authority.*
> *But you will receive power*
> *when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;*
> *and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem,*
> *in all Judea and Samaria,*
> *and to the ends of the earth."*

These are the last words spoken by Jesus before his ascension into heaven. Perhaps he gave rise to Lord Byron's poetic words, “All farewells should be sudden.” This central message for the life of faith goes beyond “Expect the unexpected.” While the unexpected, in this case, is limited to “times and dates,” there is a sense that, for humans, all things are always unexpected. To pretend otherwise is a lie. What's more, our task in faith is not only to *expect* the unexpected but to *embrace* the unexpected as gifts from God, and to be thankful in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder

Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* Act 2 begins with a conversation between the Princess of France and her attendant Boyet: “Good Lord Boyet, my beauty, though but mean, / Needs not the painted flourish of your praise: / Beauty is bought by judgment of the eye, / Not uttered by base sale of chapmen's tongues.” Two thousand years earlier Aesop wrote *The Peacock and the Crane* where the two birds offer arguments for their own beauty, drawing the conclusion that beauty is a matter of perspective.

> Genesis 1:31
> *God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.*
> *And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day*

There are many suggestions in the scriptures to look for true beauty beneath the surface. But these all refer to people. The standard phrase “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder” can also refer to mountains, waterfalls and artwork – just about everything in fact. If you take the word “good” in Genesis to mean the same as beautiful, then the phrase could be reworked, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, unless you are God, then you have the capacity to behold beauty in all things.”

Awesome!

This word is overused. Please note, to my credit, that I managed to avoid using it anywhere other than this entry.

> Exodus 34:10
> *He said: I hereby make a covenant.*
> *Before all your people*
> *I will perform marvels, such as have not been performed*
> *in all the earth or in any nation;*
> *and all the people among whom you live*
> *shall see the work of the Lord;*
> *for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you.*

Biblical translators struggle with the word “awesome.” It does not appear even once in the King James Version, yet in the New King James Version it appears 38 times. Other translations vary between these two extremes. The Good News Version only uses the word five times while the New International Version uses it 34 times. The word that is translated as awesome is more often translated with words such as “mighty,” “fearful,” and even “terrible.” In Exodus 34:10,נָוֹרא or *no-w-ra* is commonly translated as “awesome” although many translations choose “fearful,” “terrible” and like words. The Jewish Publication Society [Tanakh – 1917] stands alone in rendering the word as “tremendous.” All of this is to say that the Bible does not overuse the word “awesome.” On the rare occasions where translators choose to use it, we can trust in it having meaning, value and impact.

Everything happens for a reason

While Einstein seems to lead the world in being misquoted, he really did say, “God does not throw dice” when arguing against Max Born and quantum theory. Quantum theory acknowledges and embraces a level of randomness, at the molecular level, that Einstein never could. Those who like to use the phrase “Everything happens for a reason” live in the same camp as Einstein. “Everything happens for a reason” is similar to “There are no coincidences.” I hear these words often from inmates and others in crisis. They desperately want to make sense of their awful situation so they simply assert that there is *a* cause. Unfortunately, in the real world, it is actually a lot of work to sort out the differences between concepts like purpose and reason or responsibility and cause. One path people take to opt out of this hard work is to subscribe to the philosophy that “ours is not to reason why but to do and die.”

> Psalm 139:8
> *If I ascend to heaven, you are there;*
> *if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.*

It does not follow that if God is all seeing and all knowing that God is all causing. To make that leap requires two steps. One is to account for the freedom that God has given us in God’s love for us. The other is to acknowledge that our ability to understand what “cause” means to God may well be insufficient. Interpreting “all things work for the good” in Romans 8:28 as a statement of universal causation is also a big leap. Again, I wish to grab another entry that we examined a few pages previously. It may well be that everything happens for a reason but before you decide and act upon what you think that reason is, “think it possible that you may be mistaken.” Bypassing this hesitation may well be the equivalent of eating the forbidden fruit of Genesis Chapter 2.

Bigger is better

Perhaps this notion is as old as a fight between two “cave people” where the one with the bigger stick wins. The thought appears in many forms, such as the comment, “Size matters” which usually refers to male genitals. Sadly, size *does* seem to matter in our world. One study, published by the *Journal of Applied Psychology* estimates that, on average, a person who is six feet tall will make $166,000 more than a person who is 5'5" over the course of a 30-year career. Another study showed that given two applicants of perfectly matched qualifications, the taller person will get the job more than 70% of the time. But perhaps even more alarming is that 90% of American CEOs are above average height. Pity the diminutive! *Heightism* rules the day!

> Luke 19:3
> *He was trying to see who Jesus was,*
> *but on account of the crowd he could not,*
> *because he was short in stature.*

The New International Version renders this verse, part of the story of Zacchaeus, the repentant tax collector, so that it is clear that Zacchaeus has trouble seeing Jesus through the crowd because it is Zacchaeus*,* not Jesus*,* who is short. However, several versions (Good News, New Revised Standard, King James, American Standard English, English Standard and others) do not make it clear whether the words “he was short” refers to Zacchaeus or to Jesus. A direct line of sight is compromised with either Jesus or Zacchaeeus being short. The original Greek is unclear as well. While it is reasonable to believe that Zacchaeus was the short one, there is nothing to confirm that. What is interesting is the strength of opposition to the idea that Jesus could be short. It is as if it were impossible that Jesus could be anything but six foot tall or taller. This usually leads me to quote Isaiah 52: 14-15 “But he didn't begin that

way. At first everyone was appalled. He didn't even look human – a ruined face, disfigured past recognition. Nations all over the world will be in awe, taken aback, kings shocked into silence when they see him." If these words are messianic prophecy then Jesus was not only short, but ugly too. Given Jesus' constant compassion for the overlooked and forgotten, whether he himself was tall or short, homely or handsome, it is hard to imagine he would carry the same "bigger is better" bias that we do!

Ignorance is bliss

Thomas Gray's poem *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College* (1742) reworks Sophocles' original saying, "No more; - where ignorance is bliss, / 'Tis folly to be wise." The same point is made with the words "No news is good news," alleged to have been first uttered by King James I of England. A more modern expression came from Bobby McFerrin with his hit in 1988, *Don't Worry, Be Happy*. When the song first came out we had a 16-year-old Latin American refugee living with us. While his English was better than my Spanish, we struggled with nuanced communication. So when I tried to raise my concerns about the possibility of him impregnating any of the many girls that were showing their interest, he laughed and broke into that song. Our conversation ended; he got my point, and my wife and I did not become surrogate grandparents in our twenties.

> Matthew 24:36
> *But about that day and hour no one knows,*
> *neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*

The promise in this verse is that we don't have to "worry our pretty little heads" about the end of the world. We are told to remain blissfully ignorant about the details. We are to live each day the same way. We are to swim in God's love whether the world ends tomorrow, tonight or next year. We are freed from that concern and for this we should be thankful. I still love this phrase, often falsely attributed to Martin Luther: "If I believed the world were to end tomorrow, I would still plant a tree today."

You have two ears (and two eyes) and one mouth for a reason

These words are attributed to all sorts of self-help writers and speakers but I first remember hearing them from my grade three teacher in 1967. Often the quotation begins with: “God gave us . . .” In any event, this notion is likely as ancient as the human form. Shakespeare made a similar comment through the voice of a young boy in *Henry the Fifth*: “Men of few words are the best men.” As great as the book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* is, Carnegie’s point distils into this very saying. Pay attention and value what others say and do!

> Proverbs 20:12
> *The hearing ear and the seeing eye—*
> *the Lord has made them both.*

It takes a little bit of logical extrapolation, but if God made ears and eyes, then surely, the mouth is God’s creation too. The arithmetic is not complicated. Most often we have two ears, two eyes and only one mouth. If there is intelligent logic in God's creation, then the common proverb agrees with the biblical proverb. In both cases, we learn that we gain more by seeing and listening than by talking. What if everyone felt this way? Who would say the first word?

The bigger they come, harder they fall

While several ancient sources could be named, one is from Horace’s Odes which warns Licinius Murena of the dangers of lofty goals, with images of tall trees falling, and ships being at danger by being either too close to the shore or too far at sea. It is a call to moderation in all places. Often, these words are used in judgment of opposition. An example is Jimmy Cliff's movie and song *The Harder They Come,* which cries out about the oppression of poverty and corruption in Jamaica, implying that those who live high and mighty will eventually fall.

> 1 Samuel 17:50
> *So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone,*
> *striking down the Philistine and killing him;*
> *there was no sword in David's hand.*

The fact expressed can be understood as one of a combination of kinetic energy and the centre of gravity. But, in the context of the story of David and Goliath, it is also about the righting of oppression. This is what comes with the victory by David, the young king-in-waiting. The phrase “David and Goliath” is often used to refer, in a general sense, to a mismatch with a clearly visible underdog. Malcolm Gladwell's book, *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants* (2013) tells many stories of the underdog finding victory. The biblical witness of the underdog’s victory gives hope to the oppressed. In the same moment, the privilege of the oppressor is named as fleeting.

Give your head a shake

A common use of this phrase is to tell someone that they are gravely mistaken. It is a gentler choice to the rhetorical question, “Are you a freaking idiot?” The command to shake one’s head is an appeal to common sense and it can be spot on, in one instance, and very inappropriate in another. Indeed, two people on opposing sides of an argument could easily be telling each other to give their head a shake. A book I have always loved is the similarly titled, *A Whack on the Side of the Head*. The volume is a classic, if you will, in teaching people how to think creatively, or as the common phrase puts it, “outside the box.” In this case, the whack on the head is not to jar someone to see what is obvious. It is just the opposite: to see with a new lens what has not been obvious.

> Ephesians 4:22-23
> *You were taught to put away your former way of life,*
> *your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts,*
> *and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,*

Paul writes with a parental tone to the church in Ephesus telling them to smarten up. He is saying, “Give your head a shake.” He reminds them of their past teachings and then spells it out to them: Be renewed in the spirit of your minds. Context and relationship is everything. In this case, it appears the Ephesians were ready to be written to in this way by Paul.

Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans

John Lennon incorporated these words into his song, *Beautiful Boy (Darling Boy)* on his *Double Fantasy* album. And, said to be inspired by his son Sean, the words certainly sound like parental advice that might be offered to a child. However, many people long before Lennon are said to have made nearly identical statements. The phrase warns that life can pass you by if your thoughts are too much in the future. In this way, this saying echoes other commonly expressed sentiments such as “Seize the day” and “Be here now.”

> Matthew 6:28-29
> *And why do you worry about clothing?*
> *Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow;*
> *they neither toil nor spin,*
> *yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory*
> *was not clothed like one of these.*

This verse is found in a larger section where Jesus seeks to dissuade his followers from worrying. It is a call to focus on the immediate – what life *is* – rather than the future, or what life *could be*. Worry seems impossible when reflecting on the past or being in the moment. Worry can only happen when projecting into an uncertain future. Lennon's lyric implies some specificity, but definitely includes this starting point of worry. Like many other phrases I have considered, it promotes a radical openness to the world.

Slogans are wisdom written in shorthand

This phrase comes from the Twelve Step culture and certainly fits with the ubiquitous nature of slogans within that world in particular. In some ways this is the point (or problem) of all the sayings I have collected. The counter quote is, "Slogans reduce wisdom to shorthand."

> Matthew 13:13-15
> *This is why I speak to them in parables:*
> *"Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing,*
> *they do not hear or understand.*
> *In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:*
> *"'You will be ever hearing but never understanding;*
> *you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.*
> *For this people's heart has become calloused;*
> *they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes.*
> *Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears,*
> *understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.*

Much of Jesus' life and teaching brings caution to "us/them" thinking. Here, it appears that he himself speaks with that "us/them" language. Looking at this biblical scene and the way it unfolds in Matthew, compared to Mark (4:9-10, 25), is intriguing. In short, a major theme in Mark is the "Messianic secret" in which Mark interprets that Jesus must have instructed his apostles not to share too much about him. Matthew does not carry through with this theme, except where he appears to copy word for word from Mark. Moreover, even when he does seem to copy, he expands on Mark. He says more than Mark. Matthew is 28 chapters; Mark has only 16. In the case of this vignette, Matthew gives five reasons for speaking in parables instead of just the one reason offered by Mark. The point is that different

people have different understandings at different times. This was true for the early followers of Jesus and it is true for us. Like parables, slogans operate in the context both of where and how they are shared, and in the context of a person's situation in life and readiness to be changed or taught. As I lay out in the introduction to this book, slogans are indeed wisdom in shorthand, but sometimes more than shorthand is required.

Patience

Quakers are assumed to be patient: “As we wait patiently for divine guidance our experience is that the right way will open and we shall be led into unity.”[123]

The concept of patience works its way into a wide variety of Quaker thought. It is such a constant factor, it is almost as if Quakers breathe patience. The testimony to simplicity does not demand patience, but it is easier to live simply if you live patiently. For example, eating simply usually entails avoiding processed and fast foods. In the same way, paying respectful attention to others naturally follows a patient approach to life. “Let’s find the goodness in the other, the infinite and the humdrum, the wisdom in the ancestor, the eternal in the here-and-now.”[124]

Patience is particularly valued in worship as Quakers are reminded to be “sure to take time to reach for the underlying meaning in the ministry of others.”[125] Patience is also encouraged in business meetings where a “willingness to listen to everyone”[126] is expected.

Patience is encouraged with those outside of Quakers as well. For instance, Baltimore Yearly Meeting asks, “Do you, as the way opens, share Friends’ principles with non-Friends?”[127] Clearly, the manner in which the question is asked reminds Friends not to step out in front of the Spirit but to wait patiently for its leading.

Quakers are encouraged to worship and work together with “patience and warm affection.”[128] Patience is a way of life.

While all but one of the sayings that follow speak in glowingly clear terms of the value of patience, you simply

have to look in the chapters *Action* or *Responsibility and Service* for pieces of advice to the contrary.

Life is a marathon, not a sprint.

Seemingly, this is a phrase of unknown origin. These words have been attributed to just about every popular inspirational speaker you can imagine. The phrase is ridiculous in a way. No race longer than 200 metres is called a sprint and a marathon is always 26.2 miles. That leaves a lot of middle ground! It would be like saying most office buildings are 50 storeys, not one storey. Pushed to a literal understanding, the reality would be that just about all of life is neither a marathon nor a sprint. The exaggeration aside, the well-taken point is echoed in many other sayings as well. These include “Focus on being productive not busy,” and “It doesn't matter how slow you go, just as long as you don't stop,” and “Slow and steady wins the race,” as well as many others. Any teaching about developing sustainable economies could fall into this category as well.

> Isaiah 40:29-31
> *He gives power to the faint,*
> *Even youths will faint and be weary,*
> *and the young will fall exhausted;*
> *but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,*
> *they shall mount up with wings like eagles,*
> *they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*

The Bible is constantly providing counsel and encouragement for both patience (the marathon) and urgency (the sprint). Mark's Gospel, for instance, uses the word “immediately” 42 times (depending on translation) in 16 chapters. But there are also many passages like Isaiah 40:29-31 which advise waiting and patience. To take ourselves back to the metaphor, we are running all kinds or races, including sprints, marathons and many in between. We need to know what we are running and run accordingly;

there is no one size fits all approach. The best advice is to become aware of your own bias – towards impatience or towards patience – and seek to bring balance to your life.

Procrastination is the thief of time

This proverb comes from Edward Young's 1742 poem *Night Thoughts*. A few lines before he makes his point, he writes even more plainly, "Be wise to-day; 'tis madness to defer." Suffice to say, he believes that once a decision is made, it is to be acted on.

> Ecclesiastes 11:4
> *Whoever observes the wind will not sow;*
> *and whoever regards the clouds will not reap.*

Chapter 11 of Ecclesiastes makes specific reference to a particular kind of procrastination, the kind where the questions of why or how get in the way of the practical and most obvious responses. The most practical response is to make use of gifts as they come our way. Chapter 11 can be summarized quite simply: Life is great, enjoy it, appreciate it, get on with it, and make the most of it. Both the quote and the verse speak of a very utilitarian approach to life.

Don’t count your chickens before they hatch

Aesop's Fable *The Milkmaid and Her Pail* tells a story of a milkmaid carrying milk on her head and imagining all the further transactions she will make after selling her milk. She pictures great wealth. She is distracted and lets the milk fall from her head and spill. Her dreaming was for naught. She had not even received the milk money to buy eggs; she was certainly not ready to count her chickens. Similar sentiments are expressed with phrases like “Tomorrow never comes” and “There is many a slip between cup and lip.” Many visual reminders of this proverb are seen in the world of sports. Countless players celebrate a score or win too early and end up, often literally, dropping the ball and bringing about a different result.

> Proverbs 27:1
> *Do not boast about tomorrow,*
> *for you do not know what a day may bring.*

Again, we have a Bible verse that speaks about the world as an uncertain place and the transient nature of what we often assume is stable and permanent. The proverb puts it simply and *The Message* translation of our verse gives it heft. “Don't brashly announce what you're going to do tomorrow; you don't know the first thing about tomorrow.” The call of faith is a call to constant uncertainty. God is free and so love, forgiveness and provision would all be reasonably expected from God. However, at all times and at all places, God is sovereign. We do not know the first thing about tomorrow so premature celebrations and counting chickens before its time are criticized by this proverb as well as by many other portions of scripture.

The best is yet to come

There is an old preacher's story about the man who wanted to be buried with a fork. The implication is that, just as dessert is the best part of a meal, so is life after death better than life itself. I am sure the story is not meant to be taken so literally that we can't expect to eat pie and cake in heaven if we don't bring our own fork. But it is a view of the afterlife that imagines some kind of continuity between this world and the next. "The best is yet to come" speaks of a general approach of optimism and, no matter where you are, you can expect better. The trouble comes when such a forward-looking orientation prevents you from experiencing the present. Such a blind optimism can work like an opiate, preventing you from feeling the pain of the moment – pain that can be used for information, motivation and change.

> 1 Thessalonians 5:11
> *Therefore encourage one another and build up each other,*
> *as indeed you are doing.*

This passage concludes a section that begins with "You know very well that the Lord will come like a thief in the night." It speaks of the end of history as we know it, also known as the apocalypse. However, it does not do so by spreading a sense of superior and smug awareness of such things or a sense of fear-driven panic, but instead ends with words akin to "Keep calm and carry on," originally produced to motivate the British people in 1939 during the war with Germany. The belief that the best is yet to come in no way devalues the here and now. One can look forward to eating dessert while enjoying the meal before it. We do ourselves a disservice whenever we force the world into either/or categories.

Grin and bear it

Context is very important when encouraging people to smile through adversity, with the intensity of the adversity being the key factor. The jailhouse equivalent of this phrase is the more graphic and alarming advice to “take it dry.” To smile while someone skunks you at cribbage is a very different thing than offering no resistance when being sexually assaulted.

> Colossians 3:22
> *Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything,*
> *not only while being watched and in order to please them,*
> *but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord*

Paul often speaks of slavery as a taken-for-granted experience and advises slaves to grin and bear it. This passage, and others like it, requires the original context to make sense. One important factor is that there was a high expectation (one that we really can't conjure up 2,000 years later) that the world as it was known would end any day with the second coming. Tolerating such inequity and injustice is different in such a context. The other factor is that the church was highly persecuted and precarious, and it is quite likely that a political revolt – such as trying to end slavery in a context where it was intrinsic – would lead to war and mass fatalities. The decision to accept slavery is practical, and time bound, rather than universal and moral. The teachings to slaves cannot be understood as teachings for all times and all places. As I suggested in my comments above, “Grin and bear it” fits some situations much better than others do. A line or two later, Paul writes, “Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters.” This can lead someone to grin and bear it, but it need not always be so. Sometimes treating

others with love, honour and respect requires honest confrontation rather than simple acquiescence.

Providence

The common Quaker phrase that is akin to praying for someone is "holding them in the Light."[129] Offering to do this implies some value, presumably, in trusting in God's providence. Quakers are encouraged to remember that they "depend upon the Holy Spirit,"[130] which also implies a trust in Divine provision. The general orientation in worship is to be one of expectancy.[131]

Friends' testimonies of simplicity also point to the trust that a simple life can be fulfilling. Quakers are advised "to consider . . . capabilities and possessions not as ends in themselves, but as God's gifts."[132] Further, Quakers are asked to seek "the faith that is the foundation of the inner peace that holds firm in the face of outward confusion."[133]

In worship, vocal ministry is always seen as being provided to us with a spiritual origin: "The sense of our own unworthiness must not exempt us from this service, nor must the fear of being unable to find the right words."[134]

John Woolman, an early Quaker writer, expressed his sense of provision with the simple phrase, "All we possess is the gift of God."[135] Divine providence could not be claimed more completely than this.

Trusting in Divine provision is often easier said than done. The sayings that follow offer advice on navigating that challenge.

God helps those who help themselves

This teaching is quoted as if it is from the Bible, but it is not. I made this point once when preaching in a quiet and staid congregation, by asking them to respond repeatedly to this assertion with the response “It is not in the Bible.” As I raised my voice, I asked them to raise theirs. Eventually the whole congregation was shouting as loudly as they could. It is not the sort of trick you can pull too often; I used it once in five years as their pastor, but I would be surprised if it wasn't remembered by most of them. This expression can be found in the 1736 version of *Poor Richard's Almanac*, compiled by Benjamin Franklin. One can trust that Franklin was paraphrasing an earlier saying, likely by Sophocles, who lived for 90 years in the 4th century BCE, or by one of his contemporaries. Sophocles’ words, from what is known as *Fragment 288,* have been translated as “No good e'er comes of leisure purposeless; And Heaven never helps the men who will not act.” In Aesop's *Heracles and the Driver,* the god Heracles responds to the driver’s prayer to have his ox-cart brought out of the ditch, by saying that some effort would be required for the prayer to be answered.

> James 1:11
> *For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the field;*
> *its flower falls, and its beauty perishes.*
> *It is the same way with the rich; in the midst of a busy life,*
> *they will wither away.*

The prosperity gospel says that our prosperity is a sign of God's blessing upon us. A lot of biblical writers appear to disagree on this point. James says the rich, who help themselves, will not be helped by God. Instead, they will wither, either by God's help or by God's absence. A creative understanding could be that God is helping the rich by

withering them into a place of humility. But if that's the case, it still contradicts the way in which the words "God helps those who help themselves" are commonly used. The problem is that these words deny God freedom. God is trapped. If we help ourselves, then will God help us? No! God will do what God will do.

God will never ask more of you than you can give

There is a problem with these words. Many people have died because of what life demanded and now they are not able to give us their perspective. One could also say that, as long as we have something to give, God has not asked too much of us. Restating the words in this way is redundant: It means the same thing. The aphorism implies that whenever we survive trauma, God is our rescuer. But it does not account for cases where people survive an incident, but their trauma destroys them later.

> Matthew 10:20
> *At that time you will be given what to say,*
> *for it will not be you speaking,*
> *but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*

This verse was quoted to me when I was teaching a class on preaching. The student was claiming that since the Spirit would give her the right words whenever she preached, there was no need to study. I can't remember how I answered, but I likely reminded her that the class was optional. While the verse could be read as a particular promise to specific people at a set moment, a broader reading would imply that, if we have the faith, we will have adequate – if not perfect – words for whatever situation comes before us. As if to say that God will provide for us a response to whatever is asked from us. This same idea is dealt with more directly in 1 Corinthians 10:13: “No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.” We are left with a Bible verse that yields the same challenge as the phrase above. It does not allow for the situation which is beyond our strength. Some of us have hope that God will meet our every need. For others, this promise that seems false when

measured by our experience is reason enough not to bother with the whole idea of faith. Most of us struggle in the most difficult place, the middle, neither shutting down our inquiry with blind trust nor giving up and refusing to trust.

Let go and let God

Perhaps no other phrase is more associated with the Twelve Steps recovery program than this one. Indeed, it captures the sense of the program and its ubiquitous nature makes total sense. It does leave a couple of questions unanswered: What exactly should you let go of, and what exactly should you let God do? If there is anyone who has taken this literally, and has yielded every bit of control and accepted every bit of God's direction, it would be fascinating to meet them! A secular counterpart is “Let nature take its course.” In 1639, Pierre Corneille wrote in his play *Le vieil Horace*, “Do your duty and leave the rest to the Gods,” implying that the letting go is not the first step but one that comes after one’s “duty” is completed.

> Jeremiah 31:16
> *Thus says the Lord:*
> *Keep your voice from weeping,*
> *and your eyes from tears;*
> *for there is a reward for your work,*

So many verses could be used to show harmony with the simple slogan “Let go and let God!” (Two other examples are Matthew 11:28-30 and Isaiah 64:4.) The entire chapter 31 of Jeremiah is one big tour de force on God's provision. It stands as an invitation to live a simple life of trust, thanksgiving and acceptance rather than a life of worry, scheming and controlling. The idea that reward comes after work is very much like the Corneille quotation above.

Bloom where you are planted

The quote above has been variously attributed to Gandhi, Einstein and Churchill and they could have all said it. This adage implies another, which is: “You are exactly where you are supposed to be.” Our experience in life will likely determine whether we believe this adage. If one has bloomed where they were planted or if someone has experienced comfort and fit throughout their life, then they might well agree with phrases like “Bloom where you are planted.” If one has met a lot of failure in life or always felt out of place, they would likely question the value of this phrase, no matter who first said it. If we push the metaphor of a plant, we know that sometimes plants are replanted and they grow better in the new conditions. In the same way, sometimes people move and make other changes, such as in their careers, and do well. The AA movement asserts that “geographic cures do not work,” and uses other words to make the same point not to move from where you are.

> 1 Peter 4:10
> *Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God,*
> *serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.*

This verse offers a similar teaching to “bloom where you planted.” Jeremiah 20:1-14, 1 Corinthians 7:20-24 and other passages also offer similar words of advice. Peter tells us to grow what you are. This verse does not necessarily imply that we cannot receive new gifts. However, it could be read that way. It could also be read as a teaching to work and serve within your limits. But it could also teach us to recognize that if God's gifts to us are never-ending, when we receive a new gift we may need to adjust how we serve others accordingly. Like the phrase above, where we cannot assume only one planting, we cannot assume only one gift. The “going concern” accounting principle assumes that

businesses will continue to operate for the foreseeable future. Perhaps this can be adapted to say we are planted where we are planted for the foreseeable future. This provides for the possibility of replanting without being distracted by it.

There is no such thing as a free lunch

This phrase is often attributed to economist Milton Friedman. But it comes from a time and place where bars and taverns actually did give out free lunches to entice people into their establishments. Retail continues to use "loss leaders," offering great deals on some things, like pop and chips, to get you to buy more expensive items while you are there. Not long ago I was going to a baseball game in Minneapolis and parked in a “free parking lot.” There is only free parking on a Monopoly© board, I thought, as we went into the bar next door to “register” as instructed. You guessed it. A 15-dollar order was needed to get the “free” parking. “Not free but a bargain at twice the price,” I said as I ordered dinner.

> Ephesians 5:15-16
> *Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise,*
> *making the most of the time, because the days are evil.*

I have said repeatedly in this book that grace is defined by its free and unqualified nature. Yet, when we experience grace we are bowled over by it and we naturally feel grateful. Gratefulness can take many valid forms but at its heart, gratitude is making productive use of what we receive. This is what Paul writes to the Ephesians encouraging them in “making the most of the time.” Paul sets up this response as the “cost” of the grace we receive. There is such a fine line between responding freely in appreciation and responding in a contractual way, so as to “keep the grace coming.” The image I prefer is to let the grace pass through you so you have room for more. As such, I am siding with the idea that the Bible is full of free lunches.

If life gives you lemons, make lemonade

A similar sentiment is expressed with the shorter phrase, “Go with the flow,” an essential teaching of Taoism if not a significant component of all world religions. People probably use this expression so much because the pleasure of drinking lemonade compared to the displeasure of sucking on a lemon is so striking. Clever plays on this phrase are easy to find. “If life gives you lemons, make someone's paper cut really sting,” “If life gives you lemons, sell them on EBay,” and “When life gives you lemons, ask for salt and tequila” are three examples.

> Genesis 1:11-13
> *Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation:*
> *plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind*
> *on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.”*
> *And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation:*
> *plants yielding seed of every kind,*
> *and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it.*
> *And God saw that it was good.*

I used to say that I built my entire theology on six words: “God saw that it was good.” I don't say that, or even think like that, anymore. However, I still believe the repetition in Genesis 1 is to ensure that those words stick with us. It informs us that, if all that God created is good, we can infer that God is good. Moreover, it tells us that we are to find joy and fulfillment in a good world. Even beyond that, we are to be patient, astute and curious when the goodness of creation is not readily evident. A lemon stuck in your mouth offers most people very little, but that same lemon, used in a whole variety of ways, becomes an object lesson on the goodness of creation.

There are plenty of fish in the sea

This is the claim that scarcity is not real but only perceived, and is almost always used in the context of searching for a romantic partner. This is the name taken by a large online “dating” network that facilitates the “hook-up” culture; the name suggests that when you do not have many “non-negotiables” you will have a lot of choice. Casting your net as broadly as the sea is vast will also help.

> John 21:6
> *He said to them,*
> *"Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some."*
> *So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in*
> *because there were so many fish.*

This scene appears with more detail in Luke than in John but both bring a similar message: God provides. Some use the term "theology of abundance" to approach all situations not with a simple optimism but a deeply rooted faith that God provides. Such a belief, by itself, could lead to a kind of selfish pattern that everything is there for your amusement and need not be honoured, cherished or cared for. However, in the context of this being at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (Luke) or the beginning of our ministry after Jesus' resurrection (John) we are given a firm place to stand and from that place naturally follows honour, appreciation and care. Honour, appreciation and care are our natural responses to God’s provision. The story of Ananias and his wife Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) cautions what can happen when you live with a theology of scarcity rather than abundance: death.

Responsibility and Service

Quakers are mutually responsible not only for "the meeting for worship"[136] but for contributions to "church government [through] disciplined processes."[137] While stated with various degrees of strength by different Yearly Meetings, advice consistently reminds Friends that "Meeting for worship is fundamental . . . and [Friends] should be diligent and punctual in attendance."[138]

Quakers not only recognize that "the meeting as a whole shares a responsibility for every child in its care,"[139] they extend this responsibility to "sustaining parents who carry the responsibility" for raising children.[140]

Quakers are also advised to be an example to children so that "they may be joyful and willing in . . . service [to God.]"[141]

While Quakers recognize that life is "full of opportunities," they advise to "discern the right time to undertake or relinquish responsibilities without undue pride or guilt" while also making it clear that this "may not be great busyness."[142] However, with regard to responsibilities as a "citizen for the conduct of local, national, and international affairs," Quakers are advised to "not shrink away from the time and effort [their] involvement may demand."[143] They are also to "not take on tasks beyond [their] strength or capabilities."[144] Quakers are to attend not only to the quantity of service but to the ultimate value. Quakers are encouraged to ask themselves, "To what extent is the performance of my worldly duties promoting or hindering my growth in grace and my service for God?"[145]

Unquestionably, Quakers have a lot to consider when discerning what it means to live a responsible life of service! And the balance point between being proactively engaged and quietly prepared is not always an easy place to find. Quakers recognize this in asking of themselves, “In the setting of my personal priorities, am I willing to allocate time to devote to my most important concerns?” and “Am I able to be supportive of others who work on worthy issues outside of my main concerns?”[146] In addition, Quakers are to remember, “that none of us could do what we do, no matter how little, without drawing from the well of our faith.”[147]
Stewardship in general and stewardship of the environment are both essential ways in which Quakers are urged to live responsible lives. Quakers are to recognize that they are “part of the natural world” and therefore it is incumbent upon Friends to “form right relations . . . with due reverence.”[148] One could also see the concepts of responsibility and service as holding together all the Quaker testimonies, for Quakers are responsible for speaking and acting out of an awareness of the testimonies.

Providing service to others is a particular way that Friends can live out their responsibility. Quakers are to understand service as a component of prayer: “Prayer, springing from a deep place in the heart, may bring healing and unity as nothing else can.”[149] Likewise, presence itself is a form of service that brings strength to others.[150] Service can take many forms but “positive service to society” is a direct expectation.[151]

The axioms which follow offer responses to many questions about service and responsibility. What are we required to do with our lives? How should we go about this work? What prevents us from serving as we believe we ought? All are huge questions that many people answer with remarkably few words.

With great power comes great responsibility

Many connect these words to the character Uncle Ben in Spiderman. Others connect the words to Winston Churchill, but both the idea and similar sayings predate both. A good example comes from George Bernard Shaw's *Maxims for Revolutionists*: “Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it.”

> Luke 12:48
> *From everyone to whom much has been given,*
> *much will be required;*
> *and from the one to whom much has been entrusted,*
> *even more will be demanded.*

A friend of mine refers to this as his favourite scripture. He is loaded with talent and has never had any trouble acknowledging it. Some see him as arrogant, but perhaps he is just being honest and faithful: honest in assessing the gifts he has been given, and faithful in giving thanks for the gifts and allowing this verse to work on him and through him each day. Sometimes he appears to be tortured by the idea that “he can never do enough” which appears to lead to a faith that is embodied more by doing than being. In this verse Jesus links power and responsibility by requesting (New International Version) or demanding (New Revised Standard Version) something of us when we are granted power and opportunity.

I am not my brother's keeper

Genesis 4:9 reads, “Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Where is your brother Abel?’ ‘I don't know,’ he replied. ‘Am I my brother's keeper?’” The idea of God asking coy and indirect questions is likely foreign to many. God is not asking where Abel is. God knows that Cain killed Abel. Cain responds to an indirect question with an indirect answer. In fact, the answer is so indirect that it points directly back at the original question asker: God. God continues the conversation with a direct accusation in Genesis 4:10: “Listen; your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground!” When used in contemporary conversation, variations of “I am not by brother’s keeper” serve to deflect responsibility, as if to say, “That’s not my job. Don’t ask me.”

> Luke 10:29
> *But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus,*
> *“And who is my neighbour?”*

We are told that a teacher of the law asks Jesus this question after Jesus told him, among other things, to love his neighbour as himself. Jesus replies with the parable of Good Samaritan making the point that we can't play favourites and need to extend our charity and goodwill to all. The parable tells us that everyone is our neighbour. If we go back to Genesis 4:9, we can interpolate that we are all asked to be our brother's keeper. To say otherwise was not a good answer for Cain and it is not a good answer for us.

Act your age

This adage is often spoken by adults to young children with the implication that they are acting less mature than is appropriate. Occasionally, an older person who is acting surprisingly spry may also hear the same words. This expression was used often in our family after my younger brother, who had barely begun speaking, replied by saying, “I am acting my age.” This gave us permission to see the phrase as coercive and unhelpful and we all began to use it ironically and even as a *non-sequitur* in all sorts of situations over many years.

> 1 Corinthians 13:11
> *When I was a child, I spoke like a child,*
> *I thought like a child,*
> *I reasoned like a child;*
> *when I became an adult,*
> *I put an end to childish ways.*

What is important here is that Paul is talking about himself. He talks about his own process of maturity and invites others to consider the same. This is not the loud sarcastic correcting of someone in the way “Act your age” is often used. Similar words appear in Hebrews 5:11-14 and 1 Corinthians 3:2 which both use the image of a child who is not ready for solid food. Again, the wording here is transparent and clear. The purpose is to encourage maturation, not to spew indirect criticism meant to ridicule and demean.

Pass it on

This phrase is somewhat different than “pay it forward.” Pay it forward implies an act where you do something and expect something similar in return. “Pass it on” is about what to do when we receive, and that is to share. No Christian campfire song might be as well known as the one by this name that uses the image of a fire's spark to describe God's love. I also think of these words from the “telephone game” we played as children where we had to repeat the phrase we heard in a whisper to the person and then tell them to “pass it on.” Usually by the time the phrase had made its way around a small circle, it had changed immeasurably.

> Joel 1:3
> *Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children,*
> *and their children another generation.*

The reason we have a Bible is precisely because people “passed stories on.” Most biblical content was passed on orally at first and then recorded in writing. One could even consider the “Great Commission” (Matthew 28:16-20) as meaning, in the plainest sense, “Pass it on.” Christianity is anything but a private religion!

Better late than never

This wisdom is as old as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* if not even older. It appears in *The Canon's Yeoman's Tale*. The last part is a rant against the charlatans who play at alchemy; the Yeoman tells them to leave the dishonourable profession “for bet than nevere is late.” In the same way, imagine seeing a friend caught up in the greed and avarice of the stock market and telling them to leave the market for their own good, better late than never. I have used it, myself, to explain my habit of arriving a little late to almost all of my appointments.

> Hebrews 11:11-12
> *By faith he [Abraham] received power of procreation,*
> *even though he was too old— and Sarah herself was barren—*
> *because he considered him faithful who had promised.*
> *Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead,*
> *descendants were born*
> *as many as the stars of heaven and*
> *as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.*

It is hard to for a man to preach or even comment about Sarah's pregnancy. God asking a 90-year-old woman to bear a child sets an alarming precedent. We ought to live in “fear and trembling” if God is willing to bestow such gifts upon us. We don't hear about her morning sickness, labour pains or post-partum depression. We don't hear of her caring for a teenager while living past 100. Abraham gets the credit in the text and her heroics are lost in this story. The assumption is that while she wanted children earlier, it was better late than never (Genesis 18:1-15).

Get outside your comfort zone

Musicians, actors, business leaders, pastors, teachers, politicians, psychologists, athletes, gurus and comedians have all given this advice. The expression “comfort zone,” particularly when referring to psychosocial and not physical comfort, did not appear in writing until the 1990s. However, the notion that the kind of adrenalin that is produced with stress can improve performance is much older. One of the great developments of the last decade or so has been the increasing presence of *trauma informed care,* which recognizes that people in care, in whatever setting, may be deeply affected by past or current trauma in their life. Corrections is hardly at the leading edge but it is certainly in the discussion now. Many of the phrases in this book do not meet the test of being appropriate to use with highly traumatized people. For many, one’s comfort zone might be their only place of safety.

> Luke 9:23-24
> *Then he said to them all, “If any want to become my followers,*
> *let them deny themselves*
> *and take up their cross*
> *daily and follow me.*
> *For those who want to save their life will lose it,*
> *and those who lose their life for my sake will save it”*

Taking up your cross means freely taking up the instrument of your own death. It is a teaching not unlike “pick your poison,” except in that case taking the poison is a requirement and the question is only: Which poison? In this case, if you don't want to follow Jesus then there is no need to pick up any cross. As I heard once, “If you are going to be a follower of Christ, you had better look good on wood.” These words from Luke’s Gospel might be the biggest

statement of “get outside your comfort zone” in human history.

You have only one life to live

I have heard these words used in opposite ways. Sometimes they mean, “Be serious and focused” as if to say, “You only live once so avoid foolish risks.” But I have also heard it as advice to be “open of mind and heart”; since you only live once you cannot afford to let opportunity pass you by. Grammy winning rapper, Drake, has popularized a much shorter version of this sentiment with the acronym YOLO. You only live once.

> Hebrews 9:27-28
> *And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once,*
> *and after that the judgment,*
> *so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many,*
> *will appear a second time, not to deal with sin,*
> *but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.*

To say you only die once is not exactly the same as saying you only live once. In fact, this verse is saying that Christ lived twice and died once. What's more, taken with other verses of scripture, we are told that we join Christ in this very pattern. The scriptures speak consistently of death which is later followed by waiting for a bodily resurrection of all. The common image of a disembodied afterlife of the soul is often contradicted by scripture. If you ask a Seventh Day Adventist to explain how their orthodoxy differs from commonly held Christian beliefs, you are likely to find this is where they begin seizing upon the notions that “God only is immortal” (1 Timothy 6:16), sin is the cause of death (Romans 5:12), death is sleep (Psalm 115:17) and that we await resurrection (John 5:28-29). It is important to Seventh Day Adventists that death and new life not be supplanted by any notion of an immortal soul.

Idle hands are the devil's playthings

Several variations of this proverb can easily be found, including “The devil finds work for idle hands” and “Idle hands are the devil’s workshop.” Often this phrase is identified as coming from Chaucer's *Tale of Milibee.* However, even Chaucer refers to St. Gerome, who was writing a thousand years earlier and was likely drawing on any number of biblical texts, none of which use the metaphor in precisely the same way.

> 2 Thessalonians 3:11-12
> *For we hear that some of you are living in idleness,*
> *mere busybodies, not doing any work.*
> *Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ*
> *to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.*

The Bible frequently speaks out against idleness. On the other hand, one can be quite busy and idle at the same time. Presumably, productivity, intent and focus are all part of God’s desire for us. I have this bumper sticker on my office door: *Jesus is Coming: Look Busy*. I put it there as a reminder of my leading to follow God, and to not just appear to be doing so. In fact, God may well want stillness, attention, reflection or any number of “inefficient” acts from me. We may never want to be idle enough to invite temptation, but this does not give some kind of false value to the mania and inertia that often characterizes the pace of modern culture.

Show up

These words are often, perhaps falsely, attributed to Mother Teresa, who is quoted as saying, “Just show up and things will happen.” Regardless of who coined them, the words were further spun by Woody Allen when he said, “Eighty percent of success in life is showing up.”

> John 20:1
> *Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark,*
> *Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw*
> *that the stone had been removed from the tomb.*

Mary showed up. The other apostles didn't. The rest is Christianity.

Easy does it

We have all seen these words on bumper stickers on cars driven by members of Alcoholics Anonymous, but we may not know the words that often follow: “But do it!” We live in a world where “Can't you do just a little bit more?” is a more common thought. I even found a hospice with a slogan that brags that they overwork their workers. Simon and Garfunkel meant “Easy does it” when they sang “Slow down, you move too fast.” And the proverb “Do not remove a fly from your friend's forehead with a hatchet” makes a similar point in favour of temperance.

> Titus 2:2-3
> *Tell the older men to be temperate, serious, prudent, and sound in faith, in love, and in endurance.*
> *Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behaviour,*
> *not to be slanderers or slaves to drink;*
> *they are to teach what is good,*

Temperate, prudent, controlled all sound like good words to describe what it means to follow the wisdom of “Easy does it.” When Gitxsan people bury their loved ones, they whisper “Hagwill yiin,” which translates as “Walk softly.” They are saying that in the same way you walked softly in this world, may you do so in the next. These words became a joyful uttering for me each time I attended a burial.

Nobody is perfect

This is a not a statement of what ought to be. Instead it is offered as an observable fact that should be recognized. Johann Wolfgang van Goethe is said to have given thanks for the perfect consistency of imperfection. Certain flaws are necessary for the whole. When we recollect friends from our past is it not their quirks which come to mind first? As Thomas à Kempis wrote in *The Imitation of Christ*, “Every perfection in this life hath some imperfection annexed unto it.”

> Matthew 5:48
> *Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

These are Jesus' words here. He does not claim perfection for himself but points to God. However, the obvious implication is that perfection is possible for all of us. Wouldn't it be odd for Jesus to tell us to be perfect if it was impossible? I have a hunch the word “perfectionist” describes people who are just a little readier to agree that perfection is possible. Of the four Gospels only Matthew uses the words *τέλειοι* (5:48) and *τέλειος* (19:21) which are consistently translated as “perfect.” Aside from former TV wrestler Kurt Henning who wrestled under the name “Mr. Perfect,” we are not normally asked to seriously consider anyone's perfection. In fact, for practical purposes, this verse is likely rendered useless. Some say you can strive for perfection even while knowing you cannot get there. A richer understanding might come from the traditional rugs of the Navajo First Nation, all of which are said to be created with an intentional flaw to make room for the Spirit. As if to say that it is only with the flaw that the blanket becomes perfect. In the same way, Leonard Cohen shared this wisdom in his song *Anthem*, with the image of a crack letting the light in. We can use this image to understand

how our failings are themselves prayers for help and correction, if not perfection.

Do or do not. There is no try.

This is a slightly edited version of words spoken by Yoda in *The Empire Strikes Back*. They have entered common parlance, at least among *Star Wars* fanatics. A friend of mine parlayed his first career as a magician, juggler and street performer into his second career as an arts administrator. Among the many programs he ran was one that took working clowns and jugglers into remote northern communities to run camps. Once, a young girl was having trouble finding the rhythm of juggling three balls. The girl's mother was in the gym and yelled at her, "If you can't do it, don't try." This almost collapsed my friend as his whole life is about trying, and in particular, trying new things. He said he could not have found himself in the company of anyone more opposed to his purpose than his student's mother. Yoda's quote is generally taken to mean never quit trying and any result but success is unacceptable. However, the words on their own also imply support for the woman in the gym who said "don't do it" because you can't succeed and never will. Another common expression of this thinking comes in the rhetorical question, "Why try to do the impossible?"

> 1 Corinthians 9:24-25
> *Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete,*
> *but only one receives the prize?*
> *Run in such a way that you may win it.*
> *Athletes exercise self-control in all things;*
> *they do it to receive a perishable wreath,*
> *but we an imperishable one.*

While Paul doesn't hesitate to use highly competitive images for the life of faith, he does not say we should "win at all costs" or that "the ends justify the means." Running "in such a way that you may win it" is a highly guarded

phrase. It really says no more than “Do your best” or “Give yourself a chance” to win. His assumption that everyone who goes into the game goes with strict training is interesting because, the last I checked, some people play sports for fun. Perhaps it is this simple: Somewhere between the cities of *Do* and *Do Not* is the land of *Try Hard*.

Easier said than done

I like these words. I have used them several times in this book. They seem so apt so often. Sometimes these words describe every moment of every day. Sometimes these words describe getting out of bed. (I am writing this page while I recover from broken ribs.) The meaning is pretty straightforward. We can describe or boast about most things but accomplish and deliver fewer. One of the great underestimations in the world is how much is required to change an entire lifestyle. When someone tells me they want to leave the criminal lifestyle, I try to take them through all the people they spend time with, all the places they go to, the way they earn and spend money, and more. It is exhausting just to talk about it. My colleague used to ask folks to cross their arms in front of themselves and then ask them to put their other arm on top. Such a small change was so foreign that some could not even do it. It is a ready and handy illustration of what it means to be set in our ways.

> Psalm 31:9-10
> *Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress;*
> *my eye wastes away from grief,*
> *my soul and body also.*
> *For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing;*
> *my strength fails because of my misery, and my bones waste away.*

The Psalmist is having a day like one of mine. And it wasn't his only bad day. Psalm 6:6 reads “I am worn out from my groaning. All night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears.” There is an irony at work. While we can imagine “easier said than done” being spoken daily by someone who is bedridden, such an honest assessment is more important when we are overconfident

and not fully aware of the inherent challenges of task that we are about to take on.

You must be the change you wish to see in the world

Although this phrase is universally attributed to Mahatma Gandhi, I could not find it anywhere in his collected writings. There is no way to check, then, whether or not the words “you must” appear at the start or not. Certainly, adding those two words (or dropping them) changes the tone if not the meaning. The spirit of this phrase can be found in a letter he wrote in 1913.

> So long as in our own selves there is conflict between the tiger and the lamb, is it any wonder that there should be a similar conflict in this world-body? We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him. This is the divine mystery supreme. A wonderful thing it is and the source of our happiness. We need not wait to see what others do.

> Joshua 1:9
> *I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous;*
> *do not be frightened or dismayed,*
> *for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.*

These verses are part of the call of Joshua following the death of Moses. Unlike many other stories of calling there is no objection or hesitancy in Joshua. He acts immediately on God’s instruction. He connects word and action and indeed *is* “the change [that God] wishes to see in the world.”

I never sleep

This phrase was used as a marketing line by a local real estate agent. Presumably, he was trying to communicate that he is very hard-working. A colleague of his used to smile and say, “I sleep just fine, thank you” implying that the other agent’s sleeplessness wasn't due to devotion to work but to questionable dealings that weighed heavily upon him. While the words can be used pedantically to describe a sleeping problem, they are usually used to speak of tireless effort.

> Acts 23:1
> *While Paul was looking intently at the council he said,*
> *"Brothers, up to this day I have lived my life*
> *with a clear conscience before God."*

Paul is saying that he could “sleep just fine.” He was able to look the Sanhedrin “in the eye” and claim his life was pure and honest. Paul, who sets himself up as an example, reminds us of the need to be able to live with ourselves, to live comfortably “in our own skin.”

Ask not what your country can do for you
but what you can do for your country

John F. Kennedy spoke what may be the most remembered words ever spoken by a U.S. President. They are from his inauguration speech and may have been inspired by Cicero, who in the year 44 BCE said, “We are not born, we do not live for ourselves alone; our country, our friends, have a share in us.”

> John 15:13
> *No one has greater love than this,*
> *to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.*

Most people gravitate to a sense of great heroism when they hear this verse. It is often used when giving thanks to members of the military who lost their life in combat. I will never forget what Anglican priest Herbert O'Driscoll did with this verse when he explained that sometimes we lay down our life “one nickel at a time.” Every day asks us to sacrifice and if we spend our time waiting for our big heroic chance we miss the opportunities that come to us hour by hour, if not minute by minute. It is foolish to debate one against another for God asks different things from different people at different times. Kennedy's words too, were no doubt meant to be a daily sacrifice for some and a huge moment for others.

Unity

When Quakers say they seek *unity* they do not mean simple agreement or even consensus.[152] Believing that "the way that opens may not seem obvious to anyone at the start," Friends are to apply this openness to unity in all aspects of life.[153] Quakers speak of being "led into unity."[154] Often it is disagreement that is "recognized and understood" that leads to a "deeper and more vital unity."[155] Unity does not mean identity or sameness and, as such, requires a foundation. Clearness, love, humility, trust and other factors are all identified to produce true and lasting unity.[156]

Togetherness and belonging are also Quaker values.[157] Quakers urge each other to "live in love, as Christian brethren, ready to help one another."[158] Friends are encouraged to share in both rejoicing and in trials.[159] Friends are to "watch over one another for the good."[160] Furthermore, Friends are advised to "avoid tale bearing" and to be "careful of the reputation of others."[161] and to "view their Meeting as an extended family."[162] The relationship between Friends is expected to go well beyond courtesy and kindness. Quakers are asked, "What topics do we avoid for the sake of 'unity'?"[163]

Quaker ecology can also be seen through the lens of unity. "We need to respect, revere and cooperate with other life systems on our planet. The earth's diverse riches are not ours to exploit. Seek reverence for life and a sense of wonder at God's continuing presence in all of creation."[164]

Quakers see God as the one who unifies. The Queries and Advices of Britain Yearly Meeting are introduced with the following statement:

> As Friends we commit ourselves to a way of worship which allows God to teach and transform us. We have found corporately that the Spirit, if rightly followed, will lead us into truth, unity and love: All our testimonies grow from this leading.[165]

Unity can mean different things to different people. This breadth is illustrated by the variety of ideas in the phrases that follow.

All for one, and one for all

This well-known phrase appears in the *Three Musketeers*, written by Alexander Dumas in 1844. In fact, it is D'Artagnan, not one of the Musketeers, who utters the words coercively to Porthos before Athos and Aramis join in to swear this promise of unity. Although never officially adopted, these words have served as the motto of Switzerland since their first use there in 1868. Again, the intention is to rally to unity.

> John 17:20-21
> *I ask not only on behalf of these,*
> *but also on behalf of those*
> *who will believe in me through their word,*
> *that they may all be one.*
> *As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us,*
> *so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*

Jesus' desire for our unity is a common and frequent theme in the Gospels. It is more pronounced in John and even more so within Jesus' prayers as recorded by John. This verse is one of many where Jesus prays not only for those present but also for those who follow. This teaching is not time-bound; it applies today and into the future. The kinship we have with Jesus and our common *Father* points to the unity in which we are invited to live, within an ever-growing sense of "one for all and all for one." Indeed, in our divided world, these are radical words.

A house divided against itself cannot stand

While often attributed to Abraham Lincoln, *he* was quoting the Bible. (Mark 3:25, Matthew 12:25) The “house” in Lincoln's case was nothing less than the burgeoning nation of the United States of America, and the division was around slavery. The Labour march chant – the people united will never be defeated – was first sung in Chile in support of Salvador Allende. Since then, its rhythm has been maintained and translated for use throughout the world. Aesop's fable *The Bundle of Sticks* also makes a similar point that unity is better than division. The bundle of sticks is stronger than the same sticks held individually.

> Matthew 18:15-17
> *If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault,*
> *just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen,*
> *take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’*
> *If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church;*
> *and if they refuse to listen even to the church,*
> *treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.*

These few verses serve as a mini-lesson in conflict resolution. Step one: Try to work it out. Step two, if needed: Get some help. Step three, if needed: Get more help. Christians can’t claim 100% scores in following this teaching. There is a major curiosity in this simple advice to keep “houses from dividing.” When Jesus says, “Let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” it is often said this means to ignore them or to consider them as unclean and unwanted. Yet, Jesus did not treat any outsiders this way. He reached out to all outsiders and in doing so earned the scorn of many. Considering that only a

few verses later Jesus says to “forgive seventy-seven times,” it makes more sense to think that he may have had a smirk on his face when he spoke of the tax collectors and gentiles. It is easy to imagine that Jesus knew those he was speaking to would interpret this as permission to avoid those with whom they disagreed, or even to shun them. Jesus likely expected that his disciples would realize later that they should follow his example in welcoming outsiders.

Divide and conquer

Generally, the divide and conquer approach is considered wise by those who use it and sinister by those who are the victim of it. If it works for you, it is great. If it defeats you, it is fiendish. Political spin-doctors in panel discussions constantly accuse the other aside of playing divide and conquer but find creative euphemisms when their foes accuse them of the same strategy.

> Matthew 12:25
> *He [Jesus] knew what they were thinking and said to them,*
> *"Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste,*
> *and no city or house divided against itself will stand.*

If you want to win, then divide and conquer may appear to be a good strategy. Many of us, whether in the workplace, the family or some other setting, have experienced this strategy used against us. Likely, the tactic has achieved some success. However, Jesus says, we “will not stand” if we allow this strategy to be used against us. Here is the rub: Does this imply that the strategy itself is inherently evil? Does it follow, then, that we should never divide and conquer? While Jesus said that even he came “with a sword to divide” (Matthew 10:34), he spoke of respect, unity, harmony and love of the enemy with much greater abundance.

You shouldn't tell tales out of school

The phrase is likely older than 1530 where it is found in British Reformer William Tyndale's *The Practyse of Prelates*. Often appearing with the word “never” at the start, it is generally used as a rejoinder to mind your own business. The fact this phrase arose in the context of a school could imply that such behaviour is correctable in the young but intolerable in the adult. This notion is strongly enforced in the criminal world, sometimes in brutal ways. Slicing someone’s mouth to make it bigger is a punishment for having talked or “ratted out” someone to police. The scar marks them forever not to be trusted. In that culture, the circumstances are irrelevant and the innocence of the phrase above is but a mere dot in the distance.

> Matthew 15:19-20
> *For out of the heart come evil intentions,*
> *murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander.*
> *These are what defile a person,*

Confidentiality, respect for privacy, and the absence of gossip all fall into a well-known category. This is the category of things that people say are wrong but still do. Surely these words of Jesus, which lump false witness together with an impressive list of wrongdoing, can be understood as a reminder to “never tell tales out of school,” for such actions not only “defile a person” but undermine the very spirit of healthy community.

Variety is the spice of life

These words, written by William Cowper, appear at line 606 in his epic 1865 poem *The Task*. He is bemoaning the sense of fashion which would contrive that there is one best style and all others are inferior. Not much has changed in 150 years. Other phrases that promote variety include “To each his own,” “A change is as good as a rest,” and “Sameness is the mother of disgust, variety the cure.”

> 1 Corinthians 12:4-6
> *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;*
> *and there are varieties of services,*
> *but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities,*
> *but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.*

These verses come from a well-known section of 1 Corinthians where Paul uses the human body as a metaphor for the variety and unity the church is supposed to engender. Put simply, it promotes cooperation over competition and sees variety as a gift or an opportunity rather than a threat to be feared. Hopefully, you have found a spicy variety of sayings in this book. I have really tried to practice what I preach.

Endnotes

[1] When I speak in such general terms, I am not saying every Quaker thinks or acts this way. Nor am I saying that every Quaker ought to. What I am saying is this advice has been produced with great care with many checks and referred to by many Quakers within a particular Yearly Meeting. As such, it reflects a common Quaker understanding, at least through one Quaker body. And in almost all, if not entirely all cases, the quote represents more widely recognized thinking. Note that there is a great deal of overlap between advices and queries with some meetings adapting another's or simply adopting them in totality. Yet, in other cases, there are distinct additions, rewrites and subtractions that alter the meaning in substantial ways. My most common source is Britain Yearly Meeting as those are the Queries and Advices that have been adopted by Canadian Yearly Meeting and therefore my understanding and familiarity is much more intimate.
[2] New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Query 15
[3] Lake Erie Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Query and Advice #5
[4] Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 6th Query
[5] Ibid.
[6] North Pacific Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice and Queries on the Business Meeting
[7] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 4th Query and Advice
[8] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 41st Query and Advice
[9] Ibid.
[10] North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice and Queries on Equality
[11] Australia Yearly Meeting Queries and Advices #2
[12] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 42nd Query and Advice
[13] New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice 15
[14] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 18th Query and Advice
[15] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 26th Query and Advice
[16] Central and South African Yearly Meeting Query and Advice #2
[17] New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice 10
[18] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 6th Query and Advice
[19] Advices and Queries of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative), #2 - Outreach
[20] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 30th Query and Advice
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Central Alaska Friends Conference, Advice on Death
[24] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 29th Query and Advice
[25] Lake Erie Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Query #22
[26] Ibid.
[27] North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice and Queries on Equality
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Queries on The Meeting Community
[31] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 19th Query and Advice
[32] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 29th Query and Advice
[33] Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice on Social Responsibility
[34] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 3rd Query and Advice
[35] Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 16th Advice
[36] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 10th Query and Advice
[37] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 11th Query and Advice
[38] New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice 16
[39] North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative), Suggested Queries for Individual Friends #4
[40] The Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, Queries for Serious Consideration #6
[41] Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 2nd Query
[42] The Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, Queries for Serious Consideration, #1
[43] Indiana Yearly Meeting of The Religious Society of Friends, Questions for Spiritual Growth, Number 13
[44] North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice and Queries on the Business Meeting
[45] Lake Erie Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Query #19

[46] Central and South African Yearly Meeting, Query and Advice #2
[47] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 32nd Query and Advice
[48] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 18th Query and Advice
[49] Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice on Cultivation of the Life of the Spirit
[50] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 38th Query and Advice
[51] Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 17th Query
[52] North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice and Queries on Equality
[53] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 18th Query and Advice
[54] The Religious Society of Friends in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Te Haahi Tuuhauwiri, Advices and Queries, Section D, Ourselves and one another, #6
[55] North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative), Suggested Queries for Individual Friends #7
[56] The Religious Society of Friends in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Te Haahi Tuuhauwiri, Advices and Queries, Section D, Ourselves and one another, #9
[57] Central Alaska Friends Conference, Query #11
[58] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 15th Query and Advice
[59] Advices and Queries of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative), #9 - Civic Responsibility
[60] Advices and Queries of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative), #11 - Social and Economic Justice
[61] Central and South African Yearly Meeting, Query and Advice #10
[62] Ibid.
[63] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 10th Query and Advice
[64] Indiana Yearly Meeting of The Religious Society of Friends, Questions for Spiritual Growth, Number 6
[65] New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Query 2
[66] The Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, Queries for Serious Consideration #3
[67] Inter Mountain Yearly Meeting of Religious Society of Friends, Advices on Participation of the Life of the Meeting, Advice #6
[68] Lake Erie Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Query and Advice #4
[69] Lake Erie Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Query and Advice #3
[70] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 37th Query and Advice
[71] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 17th Query and Advice
[72] Advices and Queries of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative), #8 - Personal Responsibility
[73] Ibid.
[74] The Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, Queries for Serious Consideration #5
[75] Indiana Yearly Meeting of The Religious Society of Friends, Questions for Spiritual Growth, Number 7
[76] Lake Erie Annual Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Query and Advice #20
[77] North Pacific Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice and Queries on Civic Responsibility
[78] The Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, Queries for Serious Consideration, #11
[79] Central and South African Yearly Meeting, Query and Advice #7
[80] Central and South African Yearly Meeting, Query and Advice #3
[81] Ibid.
[82] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 9th Query and Advice
[83] The Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, Queries for Serious Consideration #4
[84] Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 20th Query
[85] Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 26th Query
[86] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, postscript
[87] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 17th Query and Advice
[88] North Pacific Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice and Queries on the Business Meeting
[89] Central and South African Yearly Meeting, Query and Advice #4
[90] Indiana Yearly Meeting of The Religious Society of Friends, Questions for Spiritual Growth, Number 3
[91] New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Query 11
[92] The Religious Society of Friends in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Te Haahi Tuuhauwiri, Advices and Queries, Section B, Reaching towards God, #7
[93] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, postscript
[94] Indiana Yearly Meeting of The Religious Society of Friends, Advices on Integrity and Simplicity

[95] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 11th Query and Advice
[96] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 37th Query and Advice
[97] Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 5th Advice
[98] New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Query 14
[99] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 27th Query and Advice
[100] Indiana Yearly Meeting of The Religious Society of Friends, Questions for Spiritual Growth, Conclusion
[101] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 32nd Query and Advice
[102] Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1st Advice
[103] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 36th Query and Advice
[104] Central and South African Yearly Meeting, Query and Advice #2
[105] Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice on Personal Life
[106] North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative), Suggested Queries for Individual Friends #3, #6 and #12
[107] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 35th Query and Advice
[108] Ibid.
[109] Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice on Civic Responsibility
[110] Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Query #9
[111] The Religious Society of Friends in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Te Haahi Tuuhauwiri, Advices and Queries, Section E, Reaching beyond ourselves, #4
[112] Western Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice on Justice in International Relations
[113] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 17th Query and Advice
[114] Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, The Ninth Query: Social Order
[115] Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 20th Advice
[116] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 2nd Query and Advice
[117] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 7th Query and Advice
[118] Ibid.
[119] Inter Mountain Yearly Meeting of Religious Society of Friends, Advices on Monthly Meeting, Advice #2
[120] North Pacific Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice and Queries on Worship
[121] North Pacific Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice and Queries on Mutual Care
[122] Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice on Science and Religion
[123] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 14th Query and Advice
[124] Central and South African Yearly Meeting, Query and Advice #7
[125] The Religious Society of Friends in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Te Haahi Tuuhauwiri, Advices and Queries, Section B, Reaching towards God, #10
[126] The Religious Society of Friends in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Te Haahi Tuuhauwiri, Advices and Queries, Section C, Seeking God's will in decision making, #3
[127]
Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Query #8
[128] Inter Mountain Yearly Meeting of Religious Society of Friends, Advices on Monthly Meeting, Advice #2
[129] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 3rd Query and Advice
[130] The Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, Queries for Serious Consideration, Introduction
[131] The Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, Queries for Serious Consideration, #3
[132] Inter Mountain Yearly Meeting of Religious Society of Friends, Advices on Simplicity, Advice #2
[133] Inter Mountain Yearly Meeting of Religious Society of Friends, Advices on Monthly Meeting, Advice #6
[134] Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 24th Advice
[135] North Pacific Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice and Queries on Stewardship
[136] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 12th Query and Advice
[137] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 15th Query and Advice
[138] New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice #1
[139] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 19th Query and Advice
[140] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 24th Query and Advice
[141] Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 8th Advice

[142] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 28th Query and Advice
[143] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 34th Query and Advice
[144] Inter Mountain Yearly Meeting of Religious Society of Friends, Advices on Service, Advice #2
[145] North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative), Suggested Queries for Individual Friends #5
[146] Central Alaska Friends Conference, Query #8
[147] Inter Mountain Yearly Meeting of Religious Society of Friends, Advices on Service, Advice #1
[148] Inter Mountain Yearly Meeting of Religious Society of Friends, Advices on Harmony with Nature, Advice #3
[149] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 10th Query and Advice
[150] Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 22nd Advice
[151] Western Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Query #11
[152] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 14th Query and Advice
[153] The Religious Society of Friends in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Te Haahi Tuuhauwiri, Advices and Queries, Section C, Seeking God's will in decision making, #2 and #4
[154] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 14th Query and Advice
[155] North Pacific Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice and Queries on Unity
[156] Lake Erie Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Query #20
[157] The Religious Society of Friends in Ireland, Queries for Serious Consideration, #9
[158] Ohio Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 14th Advice
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid.
[161] New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Advice #4
[162] Ibid.
[163] Advices and Queries of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative), Number 4 – Harmony Within The Meeting
[164] The Religious Society of Friends in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Te Haahi Tuuhauwiri, Advices and Queries, Section E, Reaching beyond ourselves, #14
[165] Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Introduction to the Queries and Advices